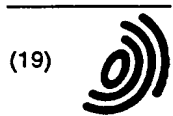


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(73) Proprietor: DSM N.V.
6411 TE Heerlen (NL)

- (72) Inventors:
- van Gorcom, Robert Franciscus Maria
NL-2622 DE Delft (NL)
 - van Hartingsveldt, Willem
NL-2613 DL Delft (NL)
 - van Paridon, Peter Andreas
NL-2201 BG Noordwijk (NL)
 - Veenstra, Annemarie Eveline
NL-2151 XH Nieuw Vennep (NL)
 - Luiten, Rudolf Gijbertus Marie
NL-2317 KR Leiden (NL)
 - Selten, Gerardus Cornelis Maria
NL-2651 HZ Berkel en Rodenrijs (NL)

(74) Representative: VOSSIUS & PARTNER
Postfach 86 07 67
81634 München (DE)

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Description

[0001] The present invention relates to the microbial production of phytase.

5 Background of the Invention

[0002] Phosphorus is an essential element for the growth of all organisms. In livestock production, feed must be supplemented with inorganic phosphorus in order to obtain a good growth performance of monogastric animals (e.g. pigs, poultry and fish).

10 [0003] In contrast, no inorganic phosphate needs to be added to the feedstuffs of ruminant animals. Microorganisms, present in the rumen, produce enzymes which catalyze the conversion of phytate (myo-inositolhexakis-phosphate) to inositol and inorganic phosphate.

[0004] Phytate occurs as a storage phosphorus source in virtually all feed substances originating from plants (for a review see: Phytic acid, chemistry and applications, E. Graf (ed.), Pilatus Press; Minneapolis, MN, U.S.A. (1986)).
15 Phytate comprises 1-3% of all nuts, cereals, legumes, oil seeds, spores and pollen. Complex salts of phytic acid are termed phytin. Phytic acid is considered to be an anti-nutritional factor since it chelates minerals such as calcium, zinc, magnesium, iron and may also react with proteins, thereby decreasing the bioavailability of protein and nutritionally important minerals.

[0005] Phytate phosphorus passes through the gastro-intestinal tract of monogastric animals and is excreted in the
20 manure. Though some hydrolysis of phytate does occur in the colon, the thus-released inorganic phosphorus has no nutritional value since inorganic phosphorus is absorbed only in the small intestine. As a consequence, a significant amount of the nutritionally important phosphorus is not used by monogastric animals, despite its presence in the feed.

[0006] The excretion of phytate phosphorus in manure has further consequences. Intensive livestock production has increased enormously during the past decades. Consequently, the amount of manure produced has increased correspondingly and has caused environmental problems in various parts of the world. This is due, in part, to the accumulation of phosphate from manure in surface waters which has caused eutrophication.

[0007] The enzymes produced by microorganisms that catalyze the conversion of phytate to inositol and inorganic phosphorus are broadly known as phytases. Phytase producing microorganisms comprise bacteria such as Bacillus subtilis (V.K. Paver and V.J. Jagannathan (1982) J. Bacteriol. 151, 1102-1108) and Pseudomonas (D.J. Cosgrove (1970) Austral. J. Biol. Sci. 23, 1207-1220); yeasts such as Saccharomyces cerevisiae (N.R. Nayini and P. Markakis (1984) Lebensmittel Wissenschaft und Technologie 17, 24-26); and fungi such as Aspergillus terreus (K. Yamada, Y. Minoda and S. Yamamoto (1986) Agric. Biol. Chem. 32, 1275-1282). Various other Aspergillus species are known to produce phytase, of which the phytase produced by Aspergillus ficuum has been determined to possess one of the highest levels of specific activity, as well as having better thermostability than phytases produced by other microorganisms (unpublished observations).

[0008] The concept of adding microbial phytase to the feedstuffs of monogastric animals has been previously described (Ware, J.H., Bluff, L. and Shieh, T.R. (1967) U.S. Patent No. 3,297,548; Nelson, T.S., Shieh, T.R., Wodzinski, R.J. and Ware, J.H. (1971) J. Nutrition 101, 1289-1294). To date, however, application of this concept has not been commercially feasible, due to the high cost of the production of the microbial enzymes (Y.W. Han (1989) Animal Feed Sci. & Technol. 24, 345-350). For economic reasons, inorganic phosphorus is still added to monogastric animal feedstuffs.

[0009] Microbial phytases have found other industrial uses as well. Exemplary of such utilities is an industrial process for the production of starch from cereals such as corn and wheat. Waste products comprising e.g. corn gluten feeds from such a wet milling process are sold as animal feed. During the steeping process phytase may be supplemented. Conditions (T = 50°C and pH = 5.5) are ideal for fungal phytases (see e.g. European Patent Application 0 321 004 to Alko Ltd.). Advantageously, animal feeds derived from the waste products of this process will contain phosphate instead of phytate.

[0010] It has also been conceived that phytases may be used in soy processing (see Finase™ Enzymes By Alko, a product information brochure published by Alko Ltd., Rajamäki, Finland). Soybean meal contains high levels of the anti-nutritional factor phytate which renders this protein source unsuitable for application in baby food and feed for fish, calves and other non-ruminants. Enzymatic upgrading of this valuable protein source improves the nutritional and commercial value of this material.

[0011] Other researchers have become interested in better characterizing various phytases and improving procedures for the production and use of these phytases. Ullah has published a procedure for the purification of phytase from wild-type Aspergillus ficuum, as well as having determined several biochemical parameters of the product obtained by this purification procedure (Ullah, A. (1988a) Preparative Biochem. 18, 443-458). Pertinent data obtained by Ullah is presented in Table 1, below.

[0012] The amino acid sequence of the N-terminus of the A. ficuum phytase protein has twice been disclosed by

Ullah: Ullah, A. (1987) Enzyme and Engineering conference IX, October 4-8, 1987, Santa Barbara, California (poster presentation); and Ullah, A. (1988b) Prep. Biochem. 18, 459-471. The amino acid sequence data obtained by Ullah is reproduced in Figure 1A, sequence C, below.

[0013] Several interesting observations may be made from the disclosures of Ullah. First of all, the "purified" preparation described in Ullah (1988a and 1988b) consists of two protein bands on SDS-PAGE. We have found, however, that phytase purified from A. ficuum contains a contaminant and that one of the bands found on SDS-PAGE, identified by Ullah as a phytase, is originating from this contaminant.

[0014] This difference is also apparent from the amino acid sequencing data published by Ullah (1987, 1988b; compare Figure 1A, sequences A and B with sequence C). We have determined, in fact, that one of the amino acid sequences of internal peptides of phytase described by Ullah (see Figure 1B, sequence E) actually belongs to the contaminating 100 kDa protein (Figure 1C) which is present in the preparation obtained via the procedure as described by Ullah, and seen as one of the two bands on SDS-PAGE (Ullah, 1988a and 1988b). Ullah does not recognize the presence of such a contaminating protein, and instead identifies it as another form of phytase. The presence of such contamination, in turn, increases the difficulty in selecting and isolating the actual nucleotide sequence encoding phytase activity. Furthermore, the presence of the contamination lowers the specific activity value of the protein tested.

[0015] Further regarding the sequence published by Ullah, it should be noted that the amino acid residue at position 12 has been disclosed by Ullah to be glycine. We have consistently found using protein and DNA sequencing techniques, that this residue is not a glycine but is in fact a cysteine (see Figures 6 and 8).

[0016] Finally, Ullah discloses that phytase is an 85 kDa protein, with a molecular weight after deglycosylation of 61.7 kDa (Ullah, 1988b). This number, which is much lower than the earlier reported 76 kDa protein (Ullah, A. and Gibson, D. (1988) Prep. Biochem. 17(1), 63-91), was based on the relative amount of carbohydrates released by hydrolysis and the apparent molecular weight of the native protein on SDS-PAGE. We have found, however, that glycosylated phytase has a single apparent molecular weight of 85 kDa, while the deglycosylated protein has an apparent molecular weight in the range of 48 - 56.5 kDa, depending on the degree of deglycosylation.

[0017] Mullaney et al. (Filamentous Fungi Conference, April, 1987, Pacific Grove, California (poster presentation)) also disclose the characterization of phytase from A. ficuum. However, this report also contains mention of two protein bands on SDS-PAGE, one of 85 kDa, and one of 100 kDa, which were present in the "purified" protein preparation. These protein bands are both identified by the authors as being forms of phytase. A method for transforming microbial hosts is proposed, but has not been reported. The cloning and isolation of the DNA sequence encoding phytase has not been described.

[0018] It will be appreciated that an economical procedure for the production of phytase will be of significant benefit to, inter alia, the animal feed industry. One method of producing a more economical phytase would be to use recombinant DNA techniques to raise expression levels of the enzyme in various microorganisms known to produce high levels of expressed peptides or proteins. To date, however, the isolation and cloning of the DNA sequence encoding phytase activity has not been published.

[0019] The present invention addresses the need for an economical procedure for the production of phytase by providing the embodiments characterized in the claims. Thus, the present invention provides a purified and isolated DNA sequence coding for phytase. The isolation and cloning of this phytase encoding DNA sequence has been achieved via the use of specific oligonucleotide probes which were developed especially for the present invention. Preferred DNA sequences encoding phytases are obtainable from fungal sources, especially filamentous fungi of the genus Aspergillus.

[0020] It is another object of the present invention to provide a vector containing an expression construct which further contains at least one copy of at least one, preferably homologous DNA sequence encoding phytase, operably linked to an appropriate regulatory region capable of directing the high level expression of peptides or proteins having phytase activity in a suitable expression host.

[0021] The expression construct provided by the present invention may be inserted into a vector, preferably a plasmid, which is capable of transforming a microbial host cell and integrating into the genome.

[0022] It is a further object of the present invention to provide a transformant, preferably a microbial host which has been transformed by a vector as described in the preceding paragraph. The transformed hosts provided by the present invention are filamentous fungi of the genera Aspergillus, Trichoderma, Mucor and Penicillium, yeasts of the genera Kluyveromyces and Saccharomyces, or bacteria of the genus Bacillus. Especially preferred expression hosts are filamentous fungi of the genus Aspergillus. The transformed hosts are capable of producing high levels of recombinant phytase on an economical, industrial scale.

[0023] In other aspects, the invention is directed to a method for the production of recombinant peptides and proteins having phytase activity in glycosylated or unglycosylated form.

[0024] A comparison of the biochemical parameters of the purified wild-type A. ficuum phytase as obtained by Ullah, against the further purified wild-type A. ficuum phytase, obtained via the present invention, is found in Table 1, below. Of particular note is the specific activity data wherein it is shown that the purified protein which we have obtained has

twice the specific activity of that which was published by Ullah.

[0025] The present invention further provides nucleotide sequences encoding proteins exhibiting phytase activity, as well as amino acid sequences of these proteins. The sequences provided may be used to design oligonucleotide probes which may in turn be used in hybridization screening studies for the identification of phytase genes from other species, especially microbial species, which may be subsequently isolated and cloned.

[0026] The sequences provided by the present invention may also be used as starting materials for the construction of "second generation" phytases. "Second generation" phytases are phytases, altered by mutagenesis techniques (e. g. site-directed mutagenesis), which have properties that differ from those of wild-type phytases or recombinant phytases such as those produced by the present invention. For example, the temperature or pH optimum, specific activity or substrate affinity may be altered so as to be better suited for application in a defined process.

[0027] Within the context of the present invention, the term phytase embraces a family of enzymes which catalyze reactions involving the removal of inorganic phosphorous from various myoinositol phosphates.

[0028] Phytase activity may be measured via a number of assays, the choice of which is not critical to the present invention. For purposes of illustration, phytase activity may be determined by measuring the amount of enzyme which liberates inorganic phosphorous from 1.5 mM sodium phytate at the rate of 1 $\mu\text{mol/min}$ at 37°C and at pH 5.50.

[0029] It should be noted that the term "phytase" as recited throughout the text of this specification is intended to encompass all peptides and proteins having phytase activity. This point is illustrated in Figure 1A which compares sequences A and B (sequences which have been obtained during the course of the present work) with sequence C (published by Ullah, 1988b). The Figure demonstrates that proteins may be obtained via the present invention which lack the first four amino acids (the protein of sequence A lacks the first seven amino acids) of the mature *A. ficuum* phytase protein. These proteins, however, retain phytase activity. The complete amino acid sequence of the phytase protein, as deduced from the corresponding nucleotide sequence, is shown in Figure 8.

[0030] Phytases produced via the present invention may be applied to a variety of processes which require the conversion of phytate to inositol and inorganic phosphate.

[0031] For example, the production of phytases according to the present invention will reduce production costs of microbial phytases in order to allow its economical application in animal feed which eventually will lead to an *in vivo* price/performance ratio competitive with inorganic phosphate. As a further benefit, the phosphorus content of manure will be considerably decreased.

[0032] It will be appreciated that the application of phytases, available at a price competitive with inorganic phosphate, will increase the degrees of freedom for the compound feed industry to produce a high quality feed. For example, when feed is supplemented with phytase, the addition of inorganic phosphate may be omitted and the contents of various materials containing phytate may be increased.

[0033] In addition to use in animal feeds and soy processing as discussed above, the phytase obtained via the present invention may also be used in diverse industrial applications such as:

- liquid feed for pigs and poultry. It has become common practice to soak feed for several hours prior to feeding. During this period the enzyme will be able to convert phytate to inositol and inorganic phosphate;
- an industrial process for the production of inositol or inositol-phosphates from phytate;
- other industrial processes using substrates that contain phytate such as the starch industry and in fermentation industries such as the brewing industry. Chelation of metal ions by phytate may cause these minerals to be unavailable for the production microorganisms. Enzymatic hydrolysis of phytate prevents these problems.

[0034] These and other objects and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following detailed description.

Brief description of the Figures

[0035]

Figure 1. A. N-terminal amino acid sequences as determined for purified phytase. The amino acid sequences labeled A and B are provided by the present invention, and originate from the phytase subforms with isoelectric points of 5.2 and 5.4, respectively. Sequence C is cited from Ullah (1987, 1988b, supra). The amino acid residue located at position 12 of sequences A and B has been determined by the present invention not to be a glycine residue. [* denotes no unambiguous identification. ** denotes no residue detected.]

B. N-terminal amino acid sequences of CNBr-cleaved internal phytase fragments. The amino acid sequences labeled A and B (apparent molecular weight approximately 2.5 kDa and 36 kDa peptides, respectively) are provided by the present invention. Sequences C through E are cited from Ullah

(1988b, supra).

C. N-terminal amino acid sequence of a 100 kDa protein which has been found by the present invention to be present in crude phytase samples.

- 5 Figure 2. A. Oligonucleotide probes designed on the basis of the data from Figure 1A, peptides A through C.
 B. Oligonucleotide probes designed on the basis of the data from Figure 1B, peptides A and B.

Figure 3. Oligonucleotide probes used for the isolation of the gene encoding the acid-phosphatase.

- 10 Figure 4. Restriction map of bacteriophage lambda AF201 containing the phytase locus of A. ficuum. The arrow indicates the position of the phytase gene and the direction of transcription. Clone # shows the subclones derived with indicated restriction enzymes from phage AF201 in pAN B-1 (for pAF 2B-1) and in pUC19 (for all other subclones).

- 15 Figure 5. Physical map of pAF 1-1. The 10 kb BamHI fragment, inserted in pUC19, contains the entire gene encoding acid phosphatase from A. ficuum.

- Figure 6. Compilation of the nucleotide sequences of plasmids pAF 2-3, pAF 2-6, and pAF 2-7 encompassing the chromosomal phytase gene locus. The phytase coding region is located from nucleotide position 210 to position 1713; an intron is present in the chromosomal gene from nucleotide position 254 to position 355. Relevant features such as restriction sites, the phytase start and stop codons, and the intron position are indicated.
- 20

- Figure 7. Detailed physical map of the sequenced phytase chromosomal locus; the arrows indicate the location of the two exons of the phytase coding region.
- 25

- Figure 8. Nucleotide sequence of the translated region of the phytase cDNA fragment and the derived amino acid sequence of the phytase protein; the start of the mature phytase protein is indicated as position +1. The amino-terminus of the 36 kDa internal protein fragment is located at amino acid position 241, whereas the 2.5 kDa protein fragment starts at amino acid position 390.
- 30

Figure 9. Physical map of the phytase expression cassette pAF 2-2S. Arrows indicate the direction of transcription of the genes.

- 35 Figure 10. IEF-PAGE evidence of the overexpression of phytase in an A. ficuum NRRL 3135 transformant. Equal volumes of culture supernatant of A. ficuum (lane 1) and transformant pAF 2-2S SP7 (lane 2), grown under identical conditions, were analysed on a Phast-System (Pharmacia) IEF-PAGE gel in the pH-range of 4.5-6. For comparison, a sample of A. ficuum phytase, purified to homogeneity was included either separately (lane 4), or mixed with a culture supernatant (lane 3). The gels were either stained with a phosphatase stain described in the text (A), or with a general protein stain (Coomassie Brilliant Blue, B). The phytase bands are indicated by an asterisk.
- 40

- Figure 11. IEF-PAGE evidence for the overexpression of phytase in A. niger CBS 513.88 transformants. Equal volumes of culture supernatants of the A. niger parent strain (lane 1), or the transformants pAF 2-2S #B (lane 2), pFYT3 #205 (lane 3) & #282 (lane 4) were analysed by IEF-PAGE as described in the legend of Fig. 10. The gels were either stained by a general phosphatase activity stain (A) or by a general protein stain (B). Phytase bands are indicated by an asterisk.
- 45

- Figure 12. Physical map of pAB 6-1. The 14.5 kb HindIII DNA insert in pUC19 contains the entire glucoamylase (AG) locus from A. niger.
- 50

Figure 13. A schematic view of the generation of AG promoter/phytase gene fusions by the polymerase chain reaction (PCR). The sequences of all oligonucleotide primers used are indicated in the text.

- 55 Figure 14. Physical map of the phytase expression cassette pAF 2-2SH.

Figure 15. Physical maps of the intermediate constructs pXXFYT1, pXXFYT2 and the phytase expression cassettes pXXFYT3, wherein XX indicates the leader sequence (L). In p18FYT# and p24FYT#, respectively,

the 18 aa and the 24 aa AG leader sequence are inserted whereas in pFYT#, the phytase leader is used.

Figure 16. Physical map of plasmid pFYT3ΔamdS.

5 Figure 17. Physical map of plasmid pFYT3INT.

Figure 18. Physical map of the phytase/AG replacement vector pREPFYT3.

10 Figure 19. Autoradiographs of chromosomal DNA, digested with *Pvu*II (A) and *Bam*HI (B) and hybridized with the ³²P-labeled *A. ficuum* phytase cDNA as probe of the microbial species *S. cerevisiae* (lane 2); *B. subtilis* (lane 3); *K. lactis* (lane 4); *P. chrysogenum* (lane 5); *P. aeruginosa* (lane 6); *S. lividans* (lane 7); *A. niger* 1 μg (lane 8); *A. niger* 5 μg (lane 9); blank (lane 10); *C. thermocellum* (lane 11). Lane 1: marker DNA.

15 Detailed Description of the Invention

[0036] The cloning of the genes encoding selected proteins produced by a microorganism can be achieved in various ways. One method is by purification of the protein of interest, subsequent determination of its N-terminal amino acid sequence and screening of a genomic library of said microorganism using a DNA oligonucleotide probe based on said N-terminal amino acid sequence. Examples of the successful application of this procedure are the cloning of the Iso-

20 penicillin N-synthetase gene from *Cephalosporium acremonium* (S.M. Samson *et al.* (1985) *Nature* 318, 191-194) and the isolation of the gene encoding the TAKA amylase for *Aspergillus oryzae* (Boel *et al.* (1986) EP-A-0238023).

[0037] Using this procedure, an attempt has been made to isolate the *Aspergillus ficuum* gene encoding phytase. The protein has been purified extensively, and several biochemical parameters have been determined. The data obtained have been compared to the data published by Ullah (1988a). Both sets of data are given in Table 1, below.

Table 1

Biochemical parameters of purified wild-type <i>A. ficuum</i> phytase		
Parameter	Present invention	Ullah
Specific activity*	100 U/mg protein	50 U/mg protein
Purity: SDS-PAGE	85 kDa	85 / 100 kDa
: IEF-PAGE	3 or 4 bands	not done
Km (Affinity constant)	250 μM	40 μM
Specificity for:		
Inositol-1-P	not active	not active
Inositol-2-P	Km = 3.3mM	5% activity
pH optimum	2.5 and 5.5	2.5 and 5.5
Temp. optimum (°C)	50	58
MW (kDa)**	85	85 and 100
MW (unglycosylated)**	56.5	61.7
Isoelectric Point***	5.0-5.4	4.5

45 * Phytase activity is measured by Ullah at 58°C rather than at 37°C. A unit of phytase activity is defined as that amount of enzyme which liberates inorganic phosphorus from 1.5 mM sodium phytate at the rate of 1 μmol/min at 37°C and at pH 5.50. To compare the fermentation yields and the specific activities, the activities disclosed by Ullah were corrected for the temperature difference. The correction is based on the difference in phytase activity measured at 37°C and at 58°C as shown in Table III of Ullah (1988b).

** Apparent Molecular Weight as determined by SDS-PAGE.

*** As determined by IEF-PAGE

50 [0038] In order to isolate the gene encoding phytase, a first set of oligonucleotide probes was designed according to the above-described method (Fig. 2A). The design of these probes was based on the amino acid sequence data. As a control for the entire procedure, similar steps were taken to isolate the gene encoding acid-phosphatase, thereby using the protein data published by Ullah and Cummins ((1987) *Prep. Biochem.* 17, 397-422). For acid-phosphatase, the corresponding gene has been isolated without difficulties. However, for phytase, the situation appeared to be different. Despite many attempts in which probes derived from the N-terminal amino acid sequence were used, no genomic DNA fragments or clones from the genomic library could be isolated which could be positively identified to encompass the gene encoding phytase.

[0039] To overcome this problem, the purified phytase was subjected to CNBr-directed cleavage and the resulting protein fragments were isolated. The N-terminal amino acid sequences of these fragments were determined (Fig. 1B), and new oligonucleotide probes were designed, based on the new data (Fig. 2B). Surprisingly, the new oligonucleotide probes did identify specific DNA fragments and were suited to unambiguously identify clones from a genomic library. No cross hybridization was observed between the new clones or DNA fragments isolated there from, and the first set of oligonucleotide probes or the clones isolated using the first set of probes.

[0040] It will be appreciated that this second set of probes may also be used to identify the coding sequences of related phytases.

[0041] The newly isolated clones were used as probes in Northern blot hybridizations. A discrete mRNA could only be detected when the mRNA was isolated from phytase producing mycelium. When RNA from non-phytase producing mycelium was attempted, no hybridization signal was found. The mRNA has a size of about 1800 b, theoretically yielding a protein having a maximal molecular weight of about 60 kDa. This value corresponds to the molecular weight which has been determined for the non-glycosylated protein, and the molecular weight of the protein as deduced from the DNA sequence.

[0042] Moreover, when introduced into a fungal cell by transformation, an increase in phytase activity could be demonstrated. This indicates conclusively that the nucleotide sequence encoding phytase has indeed been isolated. The amino acid sequences which have been determined for the purified phytase enzyme, and for the CNBr fragments obtained therefrom, concur with the amino acid sequence deduced from the sequence which was determined for the cloned gene. The nucleotide sequence and the deduced amino acid sequence are given in Figures 6 and 8, and further illustrate the cloned sequence encoding phytase.

[0043] The isolation of the nucleotide sequence encoding phytase enables the economical production of phytase on an industrial scale via the application of modern recombinant DNA techniques such as gene amplification, the exchange of regulatory elements such as e.g. promoters, secretional signals, or combinations thereof.

[0044] Accordingly, the present invention also comprises a transformed expression host capable of the efficient expression of high levels of peptides or proteins having phytase activity and, if desired, the efficient expression of acid phosphatases as well. Expression hosts of interest are filamentous fungi selected from the genera Aspergillus, Trichoderma, Mucor and Penicillium, yeasts selected from the genera Kluyveromyces and Saccharomyces, and bacteria of the genus Bacillus. Preferably, an expression host is selected which is capable of the efficient secretion of their endogenous proteins.

[0045] Of particular interest are industrial strains of Aspergillus, especially niger, ficuum, awamori or oryzae. Alternatively, Trichoderma reesei, Mucor miehei, Kluyveromyces lactis, Saccharomyces cerevisiae, Bacillus subtilis or Bacillus licheniformis may be used.

[0046] The expression construct will comprise the nucleotide sequences encoding the desired enzyme product to be expressed, usually having a signal sequence which is functional in the host and provides for secretion of the product peptide or protein.

[0047] Various signal sequences may be used according to the present invention. A signal sequence which is homologous to the cloned nucleotide sequence to be expressed may be used. Alternatively, a signal sequence which is homologous or substantially homologous with the signal sequence of a gene at the target locus of the host may be used to facilitate homologous recombination. Furthermore, signal sequences which have been designed to provide for improved secretion from the selected expression host may also be used. For example, see Von Heyne (1983) Eur. J. Biochem. 133, 17-21; and Perlman and Halverson (1983) J. Mol. Biol. 167, 391-409. The DNA sequence encoding the signal sequence may be joined directly through the sequence encoding the processing signal (cleavage recognition site) to the sequence encoding the desired protein, or through a short bridge, usually fewer than ten codons.

[0048] Preferred secretional signal sequences to be used within the scope of the present invention are the signal sequence homologous to the cloned nucleotide sequence to be expressed, the 18 amino acid glucoamylase (AG) signal sequence and the 24 amino acid glucoamylase (AG) signal sequence, the latter two being either homologous or heterologous to the nucleotide sequence to be expressed.

[0049] The expression product or nucleotide sequence of interest may be DNA which is homologous or heterologous to the expression host.

[0050] "Homologous" DNA is herein defined as DNA originating from the same genus. For example, Aspergillus is transformed with DNA from Aspergillus. In this way it is possible to improve already existing properties of the fungal genus without introducing new properties, which were not present in the genus before.

[0051] "Heterologous" DNA is defined as DNA originating from more than one genus, i.e., as follows from the example given in the preceding paragraph, DNA originating from a genus other than Aspergillus, which is then expressed in Aspergillus.

[0052] Nucleotide sequences encoding phytase activity are preferably obtained from a fungal source. More preferred are phytase encoding nucleotide sequences obtained from the genus Aspergillus. Most preferred sequences are obtained from the species Aspergillus ficuum or Aspergillus niger.

[0053] The region 5' to the open reading frame in the nucleotide sequence of interest will comprise the transcriptional initiation regulatory region (or promoter). Any region functional in the host may be employed, including the promoter which is homologous to the phytase-encoding nucleotide sequence to be expressed. However, for the most part, the region which is employed will be homologous with the region of the target locus. This has the effect of substituting the expression product of the target locus with the expression product of interest. To the extent that the level of expression and secretion of the target locus encoded protein provides for efficient production, this transcription initiation regulatory region will normally be found to be satisfactory. However, in some instances, one may wish a higher level of transcription than the target locus gene or one may wish to have inducible expression employing a particular inducing agent. In those instances, a transcriptional initiation regulatory region will be employed which is different from the region in the target locus gene. A large number of transcriptional initiation regulatory regions are known which are functional in filamentous fungi. These regions include those from genes encoding glucoamylase (AG), fungal amylase, acid phosphatase, GAPDH, *TrpC*, *AmdS*, *AlcA*, *AldA*, histone H2A, *Pyr4*, *PyrG*, isopenicillin N synthetase, PGK, acid protease, acyl transferase, and the like.

[0054] The target locus will preferably encode a highly expressed protein gene, i.e., a gene whose expression product is expressed to a concentration of at least about 0.1 g/l at the end of the fermentation process. The duration of this process may vary *inter alia* on the protein product desired. As an example of such a gene, the gene encoding glucoamylase (AG) is illustrative. Other genes of interest include fungal α -amylase, acid phosphatase, protease, acid protease, lipase, phytase and cellobiohydrolase. Especially preferred target loci are the glucoamylase gene of *A. niger*, the fungal amylase gene of *A. oryzae*, the cellobiohydrolase genes of *T. reesei*, the acid protease gene of *Mucor miehei*, the lactase gene of *Kluyveromyces lactis* or the invertase gene of *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*.

[0055] The transcriptional termination regulatory region may be from the gene of interest, the target locus, or any other convenient sequence. Where the construct includes further sequences of interest downstream (in the direction of transcription) from the gene of interest, the transcriptional termination regulatory region, if homologous with the target locus, should be substantially smaller than the homologous flanking region.

[0056] A selection marker is usually employed, which may be part of the expression construct or separate from the expression construct, so that it may integrate at a site different from the gene of interest. Since the recombinant molecules of the invention are preferably transformed to a host strain that can be used for industrial production, selection markers to monitor the transformation are preferably dominant selection markers, i.e., no mutations have to be introduced into the host strain to be able to use these selection markers. Examples of these are markers that enable transformants to grow on defined nutrient sources (e.g. the *A. nidulans amdS* gene enables *A. niger* transformants to grow on acetamide as the sole nitrogen source) or markers that confer resistance to antibiotics (e.g., the *ble* gene confers resistance to phleomycin or the *hph* gene confers resistance to hygromycin B).

[0057] The selection gene will have its own transcriptional and translational initiation and termination regulatory regions to allow for independent expression of the marker. A large number of transcriptional initiation regulatory regions are known as described previously and may be used in conjunction with the marker gene. Where antibiotic resistance is employed, the concentration of the antibiotic for selection will vary depending upon the antibiotic, generally ranging from about 30 to 300 μ g/ml of the antibiotic.

[0058] The various sequences may be joined in accordance with known techniques, such as restriction, joining complementary restriction sites and ligating, blunt ending by filling in overhangs and blunt ligation, *Bal31* resection, primer repair, in vitro mutagenesis, or the like. Polylinkers and adapters may be employed, when appropriate, and introduced or removed by known techniques to allow for ease of assembly of the expression construct. At each stage of the synthesis of the construct, the fragment may be cloned, analyzed by restriction enzyme, sequencing or hybridization, or the like. A large number of vectors are available for cloning and the particular choice is not critical to this invention. Normally, cloning will occur in *E. coli*.

[0059] The flanking regions may include at least part of the open reading frame of the target locus, particularly the signal sequence, the regulatory regions 5' and 3' of the gene of the target locus, or may extend beyond the regulatory regions. Normally, a flanking region will be at least 100 bp, usually at least 200 bp, and may be 500 bp or more. The flanking regions are selected so as to disrupt the target gene and prevent its expression. This can be achieved by inserting the expression cassette (comprising the nucleotide sequence to be expressed and optionally including additional elements such as a signal sequence, a transcriptional initiation regulatory region sequence and/or a transcriptional termination regulatory region sequence) into the open reading frame proximal to the 5' region, by substituting all or a portion of the target gene with the expression construct, or by having the expression construct intervene between the transcriptional initiation regulatory region at the target locus and the open reading frame. As already indicated, where the termination regulatory region is homologous with the region at the target locus, the 3' flanking region should be substantially larger than a termination regulatory region present in the construct.

[0060] The present invention also provides the starting material for the construction of 'second-generation' phytases, i.e. phytase enzymes with properties that differ from those of the enzyme isolated herein. Second-generation phytases may have a changed temperature or pH optimum, a changed specific activity or affinity for its substrates, or any other

changed quality that makes the enzyme more suited for application in a defined process. *E. coli* is the best host for such mutagenesis (e.g. site-directed mutagenesis). Since *E. coli* lacks the splicing machinery for the removal of introns which might be present in the phytase gene, a cDNA clone of phytase is the sequence of choice to be expressed in *E. coli*. This cDNA sequence can be readily mutated by procedures well known in the art, after which the mutated gene may be introduced into the desired expression constructs.

[0061] The construct may be transformed into the host as the cloning vector, either linear or circular, or may be removed from the cloning vector as desired. The cloning vector is preferably a plasmid. The plasmid will usually be linearized within about 1 kbp of the gene of interest. Preferably, the expression construct for the production of the phytases of the present invention will be integrated into the genome of the selected expression host.

[0062] A variety of techniques exist for transformation of filamentous fungi. These techniques include protoplast fusion or transformation, electroporation and micro-projectile firing into cells. Protoplast transformation has been found to be successful and may be used with advantage.

[0063] Mycelium of the fungal strain of interest is first converted to protoplasts by enzymatic digestion of the cell wall in the presence of an osmotic stabilizer such as KCl or sorbitol. DNA uptake by the protoplasts is aided by the addition of CaCl_2 and a concentrated solution of polyethylene glycol, the latter substance causing aggregation of the protoplasts, by which process the transforming DNA is included in the aggregates and taken up by the protoplasts. Protoplasts are subsequently allowed to regenerate on solid medium, containing an osmotic stabilizer and, when appropriate, a selective agent, for which the resistance is encoded by the transforming DNA.

[0064] After selecting for transformants, the presence of the gene of interest may be determined in a variety of ways. By employing antibodies, where the expression product is heterologous to the host, one can detect the presence of expression of the gene of interest. Alternatively, one may use Southern or Northern blots to detect the presence of the integrated gene or its transcription product.

[0065] Amplification of the nucleotide sequence or expression construct of interest may be achieved via standard techniques such as the introduction of multiple copies of the construct in the transforming vector or the use of the *amdS* gene as a selective marker (e.g. Weinans *et al.* (1985) *Current Genetics* 9, 361-368). The DNA sequence to be amplified may comprise DNA which is either homologous or heterologous to the expression host, as discussed above.

[0066] The cells may then be grown in a convenient nutrient medium. Low concentrations of a protease inhibitor may be employed, such as phenylmethylsulfonyl fluoride, α 2-macroglobulins, pepstatin, or the like. Usually, the concentration will be in the range of about 1 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ to 1 mg/ml . The protease gene(s) may be inactivated in order to avoid or reduce degradation of the desired protein.

[0067] The transformants may be grown in either batch or continuous fermentation reactors, where the nutrient medium is isolated and the desired product extracted.

[0068] Various methods for purifying the product, if necessary, may be employed, such as chromatography (e.g., HPLC), solvent-solvent extraction, electrophoresis, combinations thereof, or the like.

[0069] The present invention also provides a downstream processing method in which the fermentation broth (optionally purified) is filtered, followed by a second germ-free filtration, after which the filtered solution is concentrated. The thus-obtained liquid concentrate may be used as follows:

a) Phytase and other proteins may be precipitated from the liquid concentrate by adding acetone to a final volume of 60% (v/v) under continuous stirring. The precipitate may be dried in a vacuum at 35°C. After grinding the dry powder, the enzyme product may be used as such for application experiments. Recovery yields are about 90%.

b) The liquid concentrate may be spray-dried using conventional spray-drying techniques. Recovery yields vary from 80 to 99%.

c) The liquid concentrate may be mixed with carrier materials such as wheat bran. The thus-obtained mixture may be dried in a spray tower or in a fluid bed.

d) The liquid concentrate may be osmotically stabilized by the addition of e.g. sorbitol. A preservative such as benzoic acid may be added to prevent microbial contamination.

[0070] All four formulations may be sold to premix manufacturers, compound feed industries, other distributors and farmers.

[0071] The examples herein are given by way of illustration and are in no way intended to limit the scope of the present invention. It will be obvious to those skilled in the art that the phytase gene of the invention can be used in heterologous hybridization experiments, directed to the isolation of phytase encoding genes from other micro-organisms.

Example 1Fermentation of *A. ficuum* NRRL 3135

- 5 [0072] *Aspergillus ficuum* strain NRRL 3135 was obtained from the Northern Region Research Lab, USDA, 1815 North University Street, Peoria, Illinois, USA. Fungal spore preparations were made following standard techniques.
- [0073] Spores and subsequently cells were transferred through a series of batch fermentations in Erlenmeyer flasks to a 10 l fermentor. After growth in batch culture, the contents of this fermentor were used as inoculum for a final 500 liter batch fermentation.
- 10 [0074] The media used contains: 91 g/l corn starch (BDH Chemicals Ltd.); 38 g/l glucose.H₂O; 0.6 g/l MgSO₄.7H₂O; 0.6 g/l KCl; 0.2 g/l FeSO₄.7H₂O and 12 g/l KNO₃. The pH was maintained at 4.6 ± 0.3 by automatic titration with either 4N NaOH or 4N H₂SO₄.
- [0075] Cells were grown at 28°C at an automatically controlled dissolved oxygen concentration of 25% air saturation. Phytase production reached a maximum level of 5-10 U/ml after 10 days of fermentation.

Example 2Purification and characterization of *A. ficuum* phytase20 A. Phytase activity assay

- [0076] 100 µl of broth filtrate (diluted when necessary) or supernatant or 100 µl of demiwater as reference are added to an incubation mixture having the following composition:
- 25 - 0.25 M sodium acetate buffer pH 5.5, or
 - glycine HCl-buffer pH 2.5
 - 1 mM phytic acid, sodium salt
 - demiwater up to 900 µl
- 30 [0077] The resulting mixture is incubated for 30 minutes at 37°C. The reaction is stopped by the addition of 1 ml of 10% TCA (trichloroacetic acid). After the reaction has terminated, 2 ml of reagent (3.66 g of FeSO₄.7H₂O in 50 ml of ammonium molybdate solution (2.5 g (NH₄)₆Mo₇O₂₄.4H₂O and 8 ml H₂SO₄, diluted up to 250 ml with demiwater)) is added.
- 35 [0078] The intensity of the blue color is measured spectrophotometrically at 750 nm. The measurements are indicative of the quantity of phosphate released in relation to a calibration curve of phosphate in the range of 0 - 1 mMol/l.

Phosphatase stain

- 40 [0079] Components with phosphatase activity were detected by isoelectric focusing using a general phosphatase stain. The gel was incubated with a solution of α-naphthylphosphate and Fast Garnet GBC salt (Sigma, 0.1 & 0.2% (w/v), respectively) in 0.6 M sodium acetate buffer pH 5.5. The reaction, which results in the appearance of a black precipitate, was either terminated with methanol:acetic acid (30:10%, v/v), or, should the protein having phytase activity be further required, by rinsing with distilled water.

45 B. Purification of *A. ficuum* phytase

- [0080] Phytase was purified to homogeneity from the culture broth of *A. ficuum* NRRL 3135. The broth was first made germ-free by filtration. The resulting culture filtrate was subsequently further concentrated in a Filtron ultrafiltration unit with 30 kD cutoff filters. The pH and ionic strength of the sample were adjusted for the purification procedure by washing
- 50 the sample with 10 mM sodium acetate buffer pH 4.5. The final concentration in this ultrafiltration procedure was approximately 20 fold.
- [0081] The sample was then applied to a cation exchanger (S-Sepharose Fast-Flow in an HR 16/10 20 ml column, both obtained from Pharmacia) in a Waters Preparative 650 Advanced Protein Purification System. The proteins bound were eluted with a sodium chloride gradient from 0-1 M in the sodium acetate buffer. Phytase eluted at approximately
- 55 250 mM NaCl. Phytase activity containing fractions were pooled, concentrated and desalted by ultrafiltration. The resulting solution was applied to an anion exchanger (Q-Sepharose Fast-Flow in an HR 16/10 20 ml column, Pharmacia), and the proteins were again eluted by a sodium chloride gradient from 0-1 M in the acetate buffer described above. Phytase was eluted from this column at approximately 200 mM NaCl.

[0082] The result of these purification steps is a partially purified phytase preparation with a specific activity of approximately 40-50 U/mg protein, indicating a 25-fold purification.

[0083] Analysis of the purity of the partially purified phytase indicated the presence of a major impurity with a molecular weight of approximately 100 kDa (Fig. 1B, sequence E). Isoelectric focusing indicated the presence of a number of phosphatase activity containing enzymes, including 3-4 phytase subforms (isoelectric points varying from 5.0-5.4) (Fig 1A, sequences A and B).

[0084] In order to obtain a homogeneous phytase preparation, a further two-fold purification was achieved by a subsequent separation of the components of the partially purified phytase by isoelectric focusing in an LKB Multiphor system on Ampholine PAG plates (pH range 4-6.5). The proteins with phosphatase activity (including the phytase) were detected by the general phosphatase staining procedure described above. The bands of interest were subsequently excised from the gel and the active protein was eluted by a 16 hr incubation of the gel slices in 10 mM sodium acetate buffer pH 5.5. The protein fractions were analysed in the specific phytase activity assay, as described in Example 2, thus discriminating the phytase fractions from other acid phosphatases. The final purification factor for phytase was approximately 60 fold (specific activity of final preparation 100 U/mg protein). In this final purification step it was also possible to isolate different subforms of phytase (Fig. 1A, sequences A and B).

[0085] Monoclonal antibodies directed against the *A. ficuum* phytase were prepared, providing an effective purification procedure. The antibody was coupled to cyanogen bromide-activated Sepharose 4B (5 mg/ml gel), and this matrix was used in an immunoaffinity column. The matrix was shown to bind approximately 1 mg phytase per ml. The phytase could be eluted from the affinity column with a pH 2.5 buffer (100 mM glycine-HCl, 500 mM NaCl) without any loss of activity. This procedure can be used to isolate homogeneous phytase from a crude culture filtrate in one single step with an 80% recovery and a 60-fold purification.

C. Deglycosylation of phytase

[0086] *A. ficuum* phytase (70 µg protein) was incubated with 2.5 U N-Glycanase (Genzyme) in 0.2 M sodium phosphate buffer pH 8.6 and 10 mM 1,10-phenanthroline in a total volume of 30 µl.

[0087] After 16 hrs at 37°C, the extent of deglycosylation was checked by electrophoresis (Phast System, Pharmacia). The apparent molecular weight of the phytase was found to decrease from 85 kDa to approximately 56.5 kDa. The periodic acid Schiff (PAS) sugar staining, which identifies native phytase as a glycoprotein, failed to detect any residual carbohydrates attached to the protein. The complete removal of carbohydrate was further substantiated by the sensitive lectin-blotting method. Native and deglycosylated phytase (both 1.5 µg) were run on a standard SDS-PAGE gel and electrophoretically transferred to a PVDF membrane (Immobilon, Millipore) in 25 mM TRIS-glycine buffer pH 8.3, 20% (v/v) methanol, for a period of 16 hrs at 30V.

[0088] The membrane was subsequently incubated with 1% (w/v) bovine serum albumin in phosphate buffered saline and incubated with concanavalin A-peroxidase (Sigma, 10 µg/ml in phosphate buffered saline). The peroxidase was then stained with 4-chloro-1-naphthol (Sigma).

[0089] This sensitive method also failed to detect any residual carbohydrate attached to the deglycosylated phytase.

[0090] After deglycosylation, phytase has completely lost its activity, possibly due to aggregation of the enzyme.

Example 3

Determination of the amino acid sequence of phytase and design of oligonucleotide probes

A. Determination of the N-terminal amino acid sequence

[0091] Phytase was electrophoretically transferred from SDS-PAGE or from IEF-PAGE onto a PVDF blotting membrane (Immobilon, Millipore). Electroblooming was performed in 10 mM CAPS (3-cyclohexylamino-propanesulfonic acid) buffer pH 11.0, with 10% (v/v) methanol, for a period of 16 hrs, at 30V and 4°C.

[0092] The protein was located with Coomassie Brilliant Blue staining. The band of interest was excised, further destained in methanol and subjected to gas-phase sequencing. The procedure has been carried out several times, using several individual preparations. The results obtained are given in Figure 1A (sequences A and B).

[0093] The amino acid sequence has also been determined for a 100 kDa protein that was present in crude preparations. The data obtained for this protein are given in Figure 1C. This sequence shows considerable homology with the acid phosphatase that has been isolated from *Aspergillus niger* (MacRae *et al.* (1988) Gene 71, 339-348).

B. Determination of internal amino acid sequences

Protein fragmentation by cyanogen bromide

[0094] Phytase, purified to homogeneity, was transferred into 100 mM NaHCO₃ by ultrafiltration (Microconcentrator Centricon 30, Amicon). The protein was subsequently lyophilized, dissolved in 70% trifluoroacetic acid (v/v), and incubated for 6 hrs with an approximately 300-fold molar excess of CNBr. The reaction was terminated by dilution of the mixture with water. The resulting fragments were again lyophilized. The sample was then dissolved in SDS-PAGE sample buffer containing DTT (dithiothreitol), and the extent of fragmentation was determined by PAGE. Analytical PAGE was performed on a Pharmacia Phast-System unit, on 20% SDS-PAGE gels. The gels were prerun to create a continuous buffer system to improve the separation of the small peptides (according to the manual). Peptides were detected using a silver-staining technique known in the art, since Coomassie Brilliant Blue failed to detect the smallest peptide. The result of the procedure was a complete degradation of phytase into peptides with molecular weights of < 2.5 kDa, 36 kDa, 57 kDa and 80 kDa.

[0095] The peptides were isolated for gas-phase sequencing by SDS-Tricine-PAGE as described by Schagger & Jagow (1987) Anal. Biochem. 166, 368-379 followed by electroblotting as described above.

[0096] The N-terminus of the 57 kDa fragment is identical to the N-terminus of phytase as determined by Ullah (1988b, supra), with the exception of the first four amino acids which are absent (Figure 1A, sequence B). The N-terminal sequences of the 2.5 kDa and 36 kDa peptides are shown in Figure 1B as sequences A and B.

C. Oligonucleotide probes

[0097] Oligonucleotide probes have been designed, based on the amino acid sequences given in Figure 1A and 1B, and were prepared using an Applied Biosystems ABI 380B DNA synthesizer. These oligonucleotides are given in Figure 2A and 2B.

Example 4

Hybridization of genomic blots and genomic libraries with a first set of oligonucleotide probes

[0098] Genomic DNA from *A. ficuum* has been isolated by grinding the mycelium in liquid nitrogen, using standard procedures (e.g. Yelton et al. (1984) Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci.-U.S.A., 1470-1474). A genomic library was constructed in the bacteriophage vector lambda EMBL3, using a partial Sau3A digest of *A. ficuum* NRRL 3135 chromosomal DNA, according to standard techniques (e.g. Maniatis et al. (1982) Molecular cloning, a laboratory manual, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, New York). The thus-obtained genomic library contained 60 to 70 times the *A. ficuum* genome. The library was checked for the occurrence of plaques without insert by hybridization with the lambda EMBL3 stuffer fragment. Less than 1% of the plaques were observed to hybridize to the lambda EMBL3 probe. The insert size was 13 to 17 kb.

[0099] To identify conditions and probes that were suited for the screening of the genomic library, genomic DNA was digested with several restriction enzymes, separated on agarose gels and blotted onto Genescreen plus, using the manufacturer's instructions. The blots were hybridized with all oligonucleotide probes. Hybridization was performed using conditions of varying stringency (6 x SSC, 40 to 60°C for the hybridization; up to 0.2 x SSC, 65°C for the washing). Probes 1068 and 1024 (Figure 2A) were selected for the screening of the genomic library, although no common DNA fragments could be identified that hybridized specifically with both probes. Acid-phosphatase probe 1025 (Figure 3) gave a specific and discrete hybridization signal and hence this probe was selected for screening the genomic library for the acid phosphatase gene.

[0100] Using all three probes, hybridizing plaques could be identified in the genomic library. The hybridization signal corresponding to probe 1025 (acid phosphatase) was strong and reproducible. Hybridization signals of variable intensity were observed using probes 1024 and 1068 (phytase). No cross hybridization between the two series was observed. All three series of plaques were rescreened and DNA was isolated from eight single, positive hybridizing plaques (Maniatis et al., supra). In each series, clones that contained identical hybridizing fragments could be identified, indicating that the inserts of said clones are related and probably overlap the same genomic DNA region. Again, no cross-hybridization could be demonstrated using the two phytase specific series (probes 1024 and 1068), indicating that, although both probes used to isolate the two series of clones were obtained from the N-terminal amino acid sequence of the protein, different genomic DNA fragments had been identified and cloned.

[0101] All three series of clones were hybridized with Northern blots containing mRNA isolated from induced and non-induced mycelium (Example 6). The acid phosphatase-specific clones, as well as the isolated internal 3.1 kb Sall fragment from these clones, hybridized exclusively to induced mRNA samples. The mRNA identified by the acid phos-

phatase-specific probes is about 1800 b in length, which agrees with the known size of the protein (68 kDa, Ullah and Cummins (1987) Prep. Biochem. 17, 397-422). No hybridization of the phytase-specific clones with specific mRNA's could be demonstrated. We have thus concluded that the above-described method was unsuccessful in cloning the gene encoding phytase. It may be further concluded that this failure is not due to a failure in the method used, since the method has been successfully applied to identify the gene encoding acid phosphatase. The lambda clone containing the acid phosphatase gene was deposited on April 24, 1989 at the Centraal Bureau voor Schimmelcultures, Baarn, The Netherlands and has been assigned accession number CBS 214.89. A 10 kb BamHI fragment has been isolated from phage Z1 and subcloned into pUC19. This subclone contains the entire gene encoding acid phosphatase. The subclone, pAF 1-1 (Figure 5) was deposited on April 24, 1989 as CBS 213.89.

Example 5

Isolation of the gene encoding phytase, using a second set of oligonucleotide probes

[0102] Probes have been designed using the N-terminal amino acid sequence of CNBr-generated fragments (Figure 2B, probes 1295, 1296 and 1297) and have been hybridized with genomic DNA as described above. The feasibility of using these probes in the isolation of the gene encoding phytase was again studied by Southern hybridization of genomic blots with the probes. This time, hybridizing fragments of corresponding lengths could be identified, using all three probes, despite the fact that the probes have been derived from non-overlapping regions. No hybridization was found between the new set of probes and the clones that have been isolated using the first set of probes (Example 4). Therefore, the genomic library was rescreened using all three probes in separate experiments. A subset of the clones (lambda AF201, 219, 241 and 243) isolated with each individual probe also hybridized with both other probes, indicating that in this case, using the three different probes, clones were isolated from a single genomic region. Attempts were made to hybridize the newly isolated clones with probes 1024 and 1068. In both cases, no hybridization with the newly isolated clones was observed under conditions in which both probes had successfully hybridized to the clones which were isolated using these probes (see Example 4). This demonstrates that the newly isolated clones have no homology to the probes derived from the N-terminus of the purified phytase.

[0103] A lambda EMBL3-clone, which hybridizes to all three probes (1295-1297), was named lambda AF201 (Figure 4) and was deposited on March 9, 1989 as CBS 155.89.

[0104] A 5.1 kb BamHI fragment of lambda AF201 (subcloned in pUC19 and designated pAF 2-3, see Figure 4), hybridizing to all three oligonucleotide probes, was used to probe a Northern blot. In this case, a discrete mRNA having a size of 1800 bases was identified. This mRNA was found only in induced mycelium. Similar results were obtained when the oligonucleotides were used as probes. Therefore, using the new set of probes, a common DNA fragment has been identified, which hybridizes specifically to an induced mRNA. The length of this mRNA (1800 b) is sufficient to encode a protein of about 60 kDa, which is about the size of the non-glycosylated protein. Clearly, the isolated fragments contain at least part of the gene encoding phytase.

Example 6

Isolation of "induced" and "non-induced" mRNA

[0105] It is known from the literature that the synthesis of phytase by *A. ficuum* is subject to a stringent phosphate-dependent regulation (Han and Callagher (1987) J. Indust. Microbiol. 1, 295-301). Therefore, the demonstration that an isolated gene is subject to a similar regulation can be considered to support the evidence that the gene of interest has been cloned.

[0106] In order to isolate mRNA that has been synthesized under both producing and non-producing conditions, *A. ficuum* NRRL 3135 was grown as follows. Spores were first grown overnight in non-inducing medium. The next day, the mycelium was harvested, washed with sterile water and inoculated into either inducing or non-inducing medium. The medium used contains (per liter): 20 g corn starch; 7.5 g glucose; 0.5 g $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7 \text{H}_2\text{O}$; 0.2 g $\text{FeSO}_4 \cdot 7 \text{H}_2\text{O}$; and 7.2 g KNO_3 . For the induction of phytase, up to 2 g/l corn steep liquor was added to the medium, while non-inducing medium contains 2 g/l K_2HPO_4 . The mycelium was grown for at least a further 100 hours. Samples were taken at selected intervals. Phytase production was followed by the phytase assay as described in Example 2A. Denatured mRNA was separated by electrophoresis and blotted onto Genescreen plus. The blots were hybridized with ^{32}P -labelled pAF 2-3 or with the isolated 3.1 kb Sall fragment from pAF 1-1 (acid phosphatase) from Example 4. The results are shown in Table 2.

[0107] Positive hybridization of the phytase specific 5.1 kb BamHI fragment and the acid phosphatase specific 3.1 kb Sall fragment with isolated mRNA is observed only when cells are grown under conditions which are known to induce the synthesis of phytase and acid phosphatases. From these results it has been concluded that the isolated

genes are regulated as expected for phytase and acid phosphatases.

Table 2

[0108] Hybridization of Northern blots using the phytase-specific 5.1 kb BamHI fragment (A) or the acid phosphatase specific 3.1kb Sall fragment (B) as a probe; a + indicates the presence of the 1800 b phytase mRNA or the 1800 b acid phosphatase mRNA. The relative phytase activity was determined for the 24 hr. samples: induced cultures have 10 times more phytase activity than non-induced cultures.

	Time after inoculation	Induced	Non-induced
A	24 hours	+	-
B	24 hours	+	-

Example 7

Evidence for the cloning of the phytase gene

[0109] To obtain definitive proof for the successful isolation of the gene encoding phytase, and to study the feasibility of increasing the expression of the cloned gene, the phytase gene was subcloned into a suitable vector and transformed to A. niger 402 (ATCC 9092). To this end, the phytase gene was isolated from the lambda clone AF201 as a 10 kb NruI fragment and cloned into the StuI site of the vector pAN 8-1 (Mattern, I.E. and Punt, P.J. (1988) Fungal Genetics Newsletter 35, 25) which contains the ble gene (conferring resistance to phleomycin) as a selection marker. The resulting construct was named pAF 28-1 (Figure 4) and was transformed to A. niger 402 according to the procedure as described in Example 9, with the exception that the protoplasts were plated on Aspergillus minimal medium supplemented with 30 µg phleomycin/ml and solidified with 0.75% agar. Single transformants were purified and isolated and were tested for production in shake flasks, as described in Examples 1 and 2. As controls, transformants possessing only the vector, as well as the untransformed host were also tested (Table 3). Only A. niger 402 containing pAF 28-1 appeared to produce a phytase that reacted with a specific monoclonal antibody directed against A. ficuum phytase. The phytase reacting with this monoclonal antibody could be eluted from an immunoaffinity column at pH 2.5 and was shown to be identical in molecular weight, degree of glycosylation, isoelectric point and specific activity to the A. ficuum phytase. This finding provides clear evidence that A. niger 402 cells transformed with pAF 28-1 express a phytase that is virtually identical to the A. ficuum phytase. Similar expression was not observed in either type of control cells.

Table 3

Strain	Phytase/Activity U/ml	% of phytase-activity adsorbed onto the immunoaffinity column
<u>A. niger</u> 402	0.5	0
<u>A. niger</u> 402 pAF 28-1	0.7	10
<u>A. niger</u> 402 pAN 8-1	0.5	0

[0110] Strains were grown under induced conditions (Example 6). Samples were taken after 96 hours of growth.

Example 8

Characterization of the phytase gene.

[0111] The lambda clones containing the phytase gene have been analyzed by digestion with various restriction enzymes. A map of the genomic region encompassing the phytase gene is given in Figure 4. Defined restriction fragments have been subcloned in the cloning vector pUC19, as indicated in Figure 4.

[0112] It has previously been shown (Example 5) that the 5.1 kb BamHI fragment present in pAF 2-3 encompasses at least part of the phytase gene. Moreover, the oligonucleotide probes 1295 and 1297 (Figure 2B) were shown to hybridize to the Sall insert from pAF 2-7 (positions of pAF 2 clones are presented in Figure 4), while probe 1296 probably spans the Sall site between the fragments in pAF 2-6 and pAF 2-7. The results of these experiments indicate that the phytase encoding sequence is located in the lefthand part of the BamHI insert of pAF 2-3.

[0113] Subsequently, the nucleotide sequences of the inserts of plasmids pAF 2-3, pAF 2-6, and pAF 2-7 have been determined completely using the dideoxy chain termination method (Sanger *et al.* (1977) Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 74, 5463-5467) and shotgun strategies described by Messing *et al.* (1981, Nucl. Acids Res. 9, 309-321). In addition,

specific oligonucleotides were synthesized based on nucleotide sequence information obtained during the sequencing procedure.

[0114] The complete nucleotide sequence of clones pAF 2-3, pAF 2-6, and pAF 2-7 encompassing the chromosomal phytase gene locus is compiled in Figure 6, a graphic representation is given in Figure 7.

5 [0115] Analysis of the protein coding capacity of the complete sequence revealed that the N-terminal amino acid sequence of the mature protein was encoded starting from nucleotide position 381 (the N-terminus disclosed by Ullah is located at position 369). Furthermore, the N-terminal amino acid sequence of the 36 kDa and 2.5 kDa internal peptide fragments (see Figure 1B - sequences B and A) were found to be encoded at nucleotide positions 1101 and 1548, respectively. The open reading frame stops at nucleotide position 1713.

10 [0116] These findings clearly prove the identity of the characterized chromosomal locus as containing phytase encoding DNA sequence.

[0117] Directly upstream of the chromosomal sequence encoding the mature phytase protein, no ATG start codon can be found within the reading frame contiguous with the mature protein open reading frame; however, using intron-exon boundary characteristics, an intron can be postulated between nucleotide positions 254 and 355, bringing the
15 ATG codon at nucleotide position 210 in frame with the mature phytase encoding open reading frame. The derived amino acid sequence of this N-terminal extension closely fits the rules for a secretion signal sequence as published by von Heyne (1983, Eur. J. Biochem. 133, 17-21).

[0118] To confirm these hypotheses, the phytase cDNA was isolated by PCR-amplification with specific phytase primers and a total mRNA/cDNA population as template according to the procedures described below.

20

Isolation of poly A⁺ RNA from *Aspergillus ficuum*.

[0119] Total RNA was isolated from *A. ficuum* NRRL 3135 grown under induced conditions as mentioned in Example 6. Dry mycelium was frozen with liquid nitrogen and ground. Subsequently, the powder was homogenized in an Ultra-Turrax (full speed during 1 minute) in 3M LiCl, 6M urea at 0°C and maintained overnight at 4°C as described by Auffrey & Rougeon (1980, Eur. J. Biochem. 107, 303-314). Total cellular RNA was obtained after centrifugation at 16,000 g for 30 minutes and two successive extractions with phenol: chloroform: isoamylalcohol (50:48:2). The RNA was pre-
25 precipitated with ethanol and dissolved in 1 ml 10 mM Tris-HCl (pH 7.4), 0.5% SDS. For poly A⁺ selection the total RNA sample was heated for 5 minutes at 60°C, adjusted to 0.5 M NaCl and subsequently applied to an oligo(dT)-cellulose column. After several washes with a solution containing 10 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.4, 0.5% SDS and 0.1 M NaCl, the poly A⁺ RNA was collected by elution with 10 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.4 and 0.5% SDS.

30

Preparation of the mRNA/cDNA complex

[0120] For the synthesis of the first cDNA strand 5 µg of poly A⁺ RNA was dissolved in 16.5 µl H₂O and the following components were added: 2.5 µl RNasin (30 U/µl); 10 µl of a buffer containing 50 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.6, 6 mM MgCl₂ and 40 mM KCl; 2 µl 1 M KCl; 5 µl 0.1 M DTT; 0.5 µl oligo (dT)₁₂₋₁₈ (2.5 mg/ml); 5 µl 8 mM dNTP-mix; 5 µl BSA (1 mg/ml) and 2.5 µl Moloney MLV reverse transcriptase (200 U/ml). The mixture was incubated for 30 minutes at 37°C and the reaction was stopped by addition of 10 µl 0.2 M EDTA and 50 µl H₂O. An extraction was performed with chloroform and after centrifugation 110 µl 5 M NH₄Ac and 440 µl ethanol were successively added to the supernatant. Precipitation of the mRNA/cDNA complex was performed in a dry ice/ethanol solution for 30 minutes. The mRNA/cDNA was collected by centrifugation, subsequently washed with 70% ice-cold ethanol and dissolved in 20 µl H₂O.

40

Cloning of phytase cDNA fragments

45

[0121] Isolation of the cDNA-encoding phytase sequences was performed by the polymerase chain reaction (PCR) in two fragments. Four synthetic oligonucleotide primers were designed based on the genomic phytase sequence as presented in Figure 6.

50

Oligo 1: 5'-GGG.TAG.AAT.TCA.AAA.ATG.GGC.GTC.TCT.GCT.GTT.CTA-
3'

Oligo 2: 5'-AGT.GAC.GAA.TTC.GTG.CTG.GTG.GAG.ATG.GTG.TCG-3'

55

Oligo 3: 5'-GAG.CAC.CAA.GCT.GAA.GGA.TCC-3'

Oligo 4: 5'-AAA.CTG.CAG.GCG.TTG.AGT.GTG.ATT.GTT.TAA.AGG.G-3'

[0122] Oligo 1 contains the nucleotide sequence downstream of the phytase ATG startcodon (position 210 to 231) flanked at the 5' border by an EcoRI-site; oligo 2 contains the nucleotide sequence immediately upstream of the Sall-site (position 1129 to 1109) also flanked by an additional EcoRI-site; oligo 3 contains the nucleotide sequence around the BamHI-site (position 845 to 865) and oligo 4 contains a nucleotide sequence positioned downstream of the phytase stopcodon (position 1890 to 1867) flanked by an additional PstI-site.

[0123] The polymerase chain reactions were performed according to the supplier of Taq-polymerase (Cetus). As template the solution (1.5 µl) containing the mRNA/cDNA hybrids (described above) was used and as primers 0.3 µg of each of the oligos 1 and 2 in the reaction to amplify the N-terminal phytase cDNA part and oligos 3 and 4 in the reaction to amplify the C-terminal phytase cDNA part (see Figure 8). After denaturation (7 minutes at 100°C) and addition of 2 U Taq-polymerase, the reaction mixtures were subjected to 25 amplification cycles (each: 2' at 55°C, 3' at 72°C, 1' at 94°C) in a DNA-amplifier of Perkin-Elmer/Cetus. In the last cycle the denaturation step was omitted. After digestion (EcoRI for the N-terminal cDNA part and BamHI and PstI for the C-terminal cDNA part), both cDNA fragments were cloned into the appropriate sites of pTZ18R (Promega).

[0124] The nucleotide sequence of both obtained PCR fragments was determined using the dideoxy chain termination technique (Sanger, supra) using synthetic oligonucleotides designed after the chromosomal phytase gene sequence, as primers and total amplified DNA as well as cloned cDNA fragments as template. The sequence of the cDNA region encoding the phytase protein and the derived amino acid sequence of the phytase protein are depicted in Figure 8.

[0125] The cDNA sequence confirmed the location of the intron postulated above, and indicated that no other introns were present within the chromosomal gene sequence.

[0126] The phytase gene encodes a primary translation product of 467 amino acids (MW 51091); processing of the primary translation product by cleaving off the signal peptide results in a mature phytase protein of 444 (MW 48851) or 448 (containing the first four N-terminal amino acids as published by Ullah, MW 49232) amino acids.

Example 9

Overexpression of phytase in *Aspergilli* by introduction of additional phytase genomic DNA copies

Construction of expression vector pAF 2-2S

[0127] All constructs were made using standard molecular biological procedures, as described by Maniatis *et al.*, (1982) Molecular cloning, A laboratory Manual, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, N.Y.

[0128] An expression vector pAF 2-2S was made by subcloning the 6 kb PvuII DNA fragment of the phytase genomic clone lambda AF201 into the SmaI-site of pUC19. The derived plasmid was designated pAF 2-2 (Figure 4). As selection marker for the transformation to *Aspergillus*, the EcoRI/KpnI DNA fragment of plasmid pGW325 (Wernars K. (1986), Thesis, Agriculture University, Wageningen, The Netherlands) containing the homologous *Aspergillus nidulans* *amdS* gene was inserted into the EcoRI/KpnI sites of pAF 2-2. The resulting expression vector was designated pAF 2-2S and is shown in Figure 9.

A. Overexpression of phytase in *A. ficuum* NRRL 3135

[0129] The plasmid pAF 2-2S was introduced in *A. ficuum* NRRL 3135 using transformation procedures as described by Tilburn, J. *et al.* (1983) Gene 26, 205-221 and Kelly, J. & Hynes, M. (1985) EMBO J. 4, 475-479 with the following modifications:

- mycelium was grown on *Aspergillus* minimal medium (Cove, D. (1966) Biochem. Biophys. Acta 113, 51-56) supplemented with 10 mM arginine and 10 mM proline for 16 hours at 30°C in a rotary shaker at 300 rpm;
- only Novozym 234 (NOVO Industri), and no helicase, was used for formation of protoplasts;
- after 90 minutes of protoplast formation, 1 volume of STC-buffer (1.2 M sorbitol, 10 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.5, 50 mM CaCl₂) was added to the protoplast suspension and centrifuged at 2500 g at 4°C for 10 minutes in a swinging-bucket rotor. The protoplasts were washed and resuspended in STC-buffer at a concentration of 10⁸ cells/ml;
- plasmid DNA was added in a volume of 10 µl in TE buffer (10 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.5, 0.1 mM EDTA) to 100 µl of the protoplast suspension;
- after incubation of the DNA-protoplast suspension at 0°C for 25 minutes, 200 µl of PEG solution was added dropwise (25% PEG 4000 (Merck), 10 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.5, 50 mM CaCl₂). Subsequently, 1 ml of PEG solution (60% PEG 4000 in 10 mM Tris-HCl pH 7.5, 50 mM CaCl₂) was added slowly, with repeated mixing of the tubes. After incubation at room temperature, the suspensions were diluted with STC-buffer, mixed by inversion and centrifuged at 2000 g at 4°C for 10 minutes. The protoplasts were resuspended gently in 200 µl STC-buffer and plated on

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Aspergillus minimal medium with 10 mM acetamide as the sole nitrogen source, 15 mM CsCl, 1 M sucrose, solidified with 0.75% bacteriological agar #1 (Oxoid). Growth was performed at 33°C for 6-10 days.

[0130] Single transformants designated SP4, SP7 and SP8 were isolated, purified and tested for phytase production in shake flasks, using the process as described in Examples 1 and 2. As a control, transformants possessing only the vector (amdS gene in pUC19), as well as the untransformed host were tested.

[0131] Strains were grown under induced conditions (see Example 6) and samples were taken after 96 hours of growth. Analyses were performed by measuring the phytase activity (Table 4) and by isoelectric focusing .polyacrylamide gelelectrophoresis (IEF-PAGE).

[0132] Samples of equal volume were taken from fermentations of A. ficuum and A. ficuum pAF 2-2S SP7, grown under identical conditions, and were applied onto an IEF-PAGE gel (pH-range 4.5-6, Phast-System, Pharmacia). The electrophoresis was performed according to the instructions of the manufacturer. Subsequently, the gels were either stained with the general protein stain Coomassie Brilliant Blue (Figure 10B), or with the general phosphatase activity staining described in Example 2 (Figure 10A).

[0133] A sample of A. ficuum phytase, purified to homogeneity (via immunoaffinity chromatography as described in Example 7), was also applied either alone, or mixed with a culture supernatant.

[0134] Phytase is present in the various samples in a number of isoforms (indicated with an asterisk), as has been mentioned in this invention. The two major isoenzymes are clearly visible in the purified phytase in lanes 3 and 4 with both staining procedures (A and B). The phytase bands are barely visible in the parent A. ficuum strain, and significantly increased in the pAF 2-2S SP7 transformant strain.

Table 4

Increase of phytase production by transformation of <u>A. ficuum</u> NRRL 3135	
Strain	Phytase activity (U/ml)
<u>A. ficuum</u>	0.6
<u>A. ficuum</u> + control plasmid	0.6
<u>A. ficuum</u> pAF 2-2S SP8	7.6
<u>A. ficuum</u> pAF 2-2S SP7	6.7
<u>A. ficuum</u> pAF 2-2S SP4	4.3

B. Overexpression of phytase in A. niger CBS 513.88

[0135] The expression vector pAF 2-2S was also introduced in A. niger CBS 513.88 by transformation procedures as described for A. ficuum. Single transformants were isolated, purified and tested for phytase production in shake flasks under induced growth conditions as described in Example 6.

[0136] Phytase expression levels of some transformants (designated as A. niger pAF 2-2S # 8, # 20 and # 33) and control strains were performed as described in Example 9A and are shown in Table 5.

[0137] A. niger transformants have phytase expression levels comparable with A. ficuum transformants. In addition, this result indicates that the A. ficuum phytase promoter is active in A. niger.

[0138] Further analysis was performed on culture medium of transformant pAF 2-2S #8 by electrophoresis on an IEF-PAGE gel in the pH range of 4.5-6 on a Phast-System (Pharmacia) as described above. Equal volumes of the culture supernatants of the A. niger parent strain and of the transformant pAF 2-2S #8, grown under identical conditions, were applied onto the gel. The gels were run and subsequently stained as above.

[0139] The parent A. niger produces a very low amount of phytase, which could not be detected by gel electrophoresis. The strain pAF 2-2S #8 produces approx. 90 times more phytase, and this difference is clearly visible in Figure 11.

[0140] Several isoforms of the phytase enzyme are detected (indicated by asterisk). The general protein stain indicates that the intensity of the phytase protein bands is dramatically increased, while no other major protein bands appear.

Table 5

Phytase production by transformation of <u>A. niger</u> CBS 513.88 with pAF 2-2S	
Strain	Phytase activity (U/ml)
<u>A. niger</u>	0.2
<u>A. niger</u> + control plasmid	0.2

Table 5 (continued)

Phytase production by transformation of <i>A. niger</i> CBS 513.88 with pAF 2-2S	
Strain	Phytase activity (U/ml)
<i>A. niger</i> pAF 2-2S # 8	14
<i>A. niger</i> pAF 2-2S # 33	5
<i>A. niger</i> pAF 2-2S # 20	4

Example 10

Phytase expression in *A. niger* transformed with expression vectors containing the *A. ficuum* phytase gene fused to the promoter and/or signal sequences of the *A. niger* amyloglucosidase (AG) gene

Constructions of the expression vectors

[0141] To obtain overexpression of phytase in *A. niger*, additional expression cassettes are derived in which the *A. ficuum* phytase gene is under the control of the *A. niger* amyloglucosidase (AG) promoter in combination with different signal sequences. In p18FYT3 and p24FYT3 the respective 18 and 24 amino acid (aa) leader sequences of the AG gene from *A. niger* are fused to the phytase gene fragment encoding the mature protein. In the expression cassette pFYT3 the AG promoter sequence is fused to the phytase encoding sequence including the phytase leader sequence.

Construction of p18FYT3

[0142] Fusion of the AG-promoter and the 18 aa AG-leader sequence to the phytase sequence encoding the mature protein was performed by the Polymerase Chain Reaction method. In the PCR reactions two different templates were used: pAF 2-2S containing the entire phytase gene as described above, and pAB6-1, a plasmid which contains the entire AG-locus from *A. niger*, which was isolated from an *A. niger* plasmid library, containing 13-15 kb *Hind*III fragments in pUC19. For the isolation, AG-specific oligos were used:

AG-1: 5' -GACAATGGCTACACCAGCACCGCAACGGACATTGTTTGGCCC-3'

AG-2: 5' -AAGCAGCCATTGCCCGAAGCCGAT-3'

both based on the nucleotide sequence published for *A. niger* (Boel *et al.* (1984), EMBO J. 3, 1097-1102; Boel *et al.* (1984), Mol. and Cell. Biol. 4, 2306-2315). The oligonucleotide probes were derived from the sequence surrounding intron 2: oligo AG-1 is located 3' of the intron and has a polarity identical to the AG mRNA and oligo AG-2 is found upstream of intron 2 and is chosen antiparallel to the AG mRNA. Plasmid pAB6-1 contains the AG gene on a 14.5 kb *Hind*III fragment (see Figure 12).

[0143] As primers for the PCR-amplifications, four synthetic oligonucleotides were designed with the following sequences.

Oligo 1: 5'-CTCTGCAGGAATTCAAGCTAG-3' (an AG-specific
 sequence around the EcoRI site approx. 250 bp
 upstream of the ATG initiation codon).
 Oligo 18-2: 5'-CGAGGCGGGGACTGCCAGTGCCAACCCTGTGCAGAC-3'
 mature phytase <—|> 18 AA AG-leader
 Oligo 18-3: 5'-GTCTGCACAGGGTTGGCACTGGCAGTCCCCGCTCG-3'
 18 aa AG-leader <—|> mature phytase
 Oligo 4: 5'-GGCACGAGGATCCTTCAGCTT-3' (a phytase specific
 sequence located at the BamHI site on position
 861)

[0144] The PCR was performed as described by Saiki *et al.* (1988), Science 239, 487-491, with minor modifications (see Example 8).

[0145] To fuse the AG sequences to the phytase coding sequences, two separate PCR's were carried out: the first reaction with pAB6-1 as template and oligos 1 and 18-2 as primers to amplify a 300 bp DNA fragment containing the 3'-part of the AG promoter and the 18 aa AG-leader sequence flanked at the 3'-border by the nucleotides of the phytase gene, and the second reaction with pAF 2-2S as template and oligos 18-3 and 4 as primers to amplify a 600 bp DNA fragment containing the 5'-part of the phytase gene flanked at the 5'-border by 18 nucleotides of the AG signal peptide. A schematic view of these amplifications is presented in Figure 13.

[0146] The two DNA fragments generated were purified by gelelectrophoresis and ethanol precipitation and used as templates in the third PCR with oligos 1 and 4 as primers to generate the AG-phytase fusion. The obtained DNA fragment was digested with EcoRI and BamHI and subcloned into pTZ18R. The resulting fusion was sequenced and designated p18FYT1.

[0147] The remaining (3.5 kb) upstream region of the AG-promoter was obtained by digestion of pAB6-1 with KpnI and partially with EcoRI and ligated to the 1.1 kb EcoRI/BamHI fragment of p18FYT1 and subsequently cloned into the KpnI/BamHI sites of pTZ18R. Plasmid p18FYT2 thus obtained is shown in Figure 15.

[0148] An additional HindIII restriction site was introduced by insertion of the synthetic fragment:

```

      5' AATTCAAGCTTG      3'
      3'      GTTCGAACTTAA 5'
  
```

into the EcoRI-site (flanking the amdS-gene) of pAF 2-2S. The obtained plasmid was designated pAF 2-2SH (Figure 14) and is used as starting plasmid to exchange the phytase promoter sequences by the PCR AG-phytase fusion DNA fragments.

[0149] For the final construction, p18FYT2 and pAF 2-2SH were digested with KpnI and partially with BamHI. The 4.6 kb DNA fragment of p18FYT2 and the 11 kb DNA fragment of pAF 2-2SH were isolated and purified by gel electrophoresis, subsequently ligated and transferred to E. coli. The derived expression cassette was designated p18FYT3 (Figure 15).

Construction of p24FYT3

[0150] Fusion of the AG-promoter and the 24 aa AG leader sequence to the mature phytase encoding sequence was performed by PCR-amplification as described above for the construction for p18FYT3 with the exception of the primers used. Two new primers were synthesized with the following sequence:

Oligo 24-2: 5'-CGAGCCGGGGACTGCCAGGCGCTTGGAAATCACATT-3'

mature phytase <—|> 24 AA AG-leader

Oligo 24-3: 5'-AATGTGATTTCGAAGCGCCTGGCAGTCCCCGCCTCG-3'

24 aa AG-leader <—|> mature phytase

Two separate PCR's were carried out: the first reaction with pAB 6-1 as template and oligos 1 and 24-2 as primers to amplify a 318 bp DNA fragment containing the 3'-part of the AG promoter and the 24 aa AG leader sequence flanked at the 3'-border by 18 nucleotides of the phytase gene and the second reaction with pAF 2-2S as template and oligos 24-3 and 4 as primers to amplify a DNA fragment containing the 5'-part of the phytase gene flanked at the 5'-border by 18 nucleotides of the 24 aa AG leader. A schematic view of these amplifications is presented in Figure 13.

[0151] For the construction of the final expression cassette p24FYT3 via the intermediate plasmids p24FYT1 and p24FYT2, the same cloning pathway/procedure was used as described for p18FYT1 and p18FYT2 to derive the expression cassette p18FYT3 (Figure 15).

Construction of pFYT3

[0152] Fusion of the AG-promoter to the phytase gene (including the phytase leader) sequence was also performed by PCR-amplification as described above for the construction of p18FYT3 with the exception of the primers used. Two additional primers were generated with the following sequence:

Oligo fyt-2: 5'-AACAGCAGAGACGCCCATTGCTGAGGTGTAATGATG-3'

phytase leader <—|> AG-promoter

Oligo fyt-3: 5'-CATCATTACACCTCAGCAATGGGCGTCTCTGCTGTT-3'

AG-promoter <—|> phytase leader

[0153] Two separate PCR's were carried out: the first reaction with pAB 6-1 as template and oligos 1 and fyt-2 as primers to amplify a 282 bp DNA fragment containing the 3'-part of the AG promoter flanked at the 3'-border by 18 nucleotides of the phytase leader and the second reaction with pAF 2-2S as template and oligos fyt-3 and 4 as primers to amplify a DNA fragment containing the 5'-part of the phytase gene (including the phytase leader) and flanked at the 5'-border by 18 nucleotides of the AG-promoter. A schematic view of these amplifications is presented in Figure 13.

[0154] For the construction of the final expression cassette pFYT3 along the intermediate plasmids pFYT1 and pFYT2, the same cloning pathway/procedure was used as described for p18FYT1 and p18FYT2 to derive the expression cassette p18FYT3 (Figure 15).

Expression of the phytase gene under the control of the AG promoter in *A. niger*

[0155] *E. coli* sequences were removed from the phytase expression cassettes described above by *Hind*III digestion. Afterwards, the *A. niger* strain CBS 513.88 (deposited October 10, 1988) was transformed with 10 µg DNA fragment by procedures as described in Example 9. Single *A. niger* transformants from each expression cassette were isolated, and spores were streaked on selective acetamide-agar plates. Spores of each transformant were collected from cells grown for 3 days at 37°C on 0.4% potato-dextrose (Oxoid, England) agar plates. Phytase production was tested in shake flasks under the following growth conditions:

[0156] Approximately 1×10^8 spores were inoculated in 100 ml pre-culture medium containing (per liter): 1 g KH_2PO_4 ; 30 g maltose; 5 g yeast-extract; 10 g casein-hydrolysate; 0.5 g $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and 3 g Tween 80. The pH was adjusted to 5.5.

[0157] After growing overnight at 34°C in a rotary shaker, 1 ml of the growing culture was inoculated in a 100 ml mainculture containing (per liter): 2 g KH_2PO_4 ; 70 g maltodextrin (Maldex MDO₃, Amylum); 12.5 g yeast-extract; 25 g casein-hydrolysate; 2 g K_2SO_4 ; 0.5 g $\text{MgSO}_4 \cdot 7\text{H}_2\text{O}$; 0.03 g ZnCl_2 ; 0.02 g CaCl_2 ; 0.05 g $\text{MnSO}_4 \cdot 4\text{H}_2\text{O}$ and FeSO_4 . The pH was adjusted to 5.6.

[0158] The mycelium was grown for at least 140 hours. Phytase production was measured as described in Example 2. The production results of several, random transformants obtained from each expression cassette are shown in Table 6.

Table 6

Phytase production of several *A. niger* CBS 513.88 strains transformed with plasmids containing the *A. ficuum* phytase gene under control of the *A. niger* AG-promoter in combination with different leader sequences

Expression cassette	Transformant #	Phytase activity (U/ml)
p18FYT3 (AG-promoter/ 18 aa AG-leader)	p18FYT3 # 240	82
	p18FYT3 # 242	84
	p18FYT3 # 243	62
	p18FYT3 # 244	43
	p18FYT3 # 245	80
	p18FYT3 # 246	82
	p18FYT3 # 250	110
p24FYT3 (AG-promoter/ 24 aa AG-leader)	p24FYT3 # 256	8
	p24FYT3 # 257	30
	p24FYT3 # 258	13
	p24FYT3 # 259	33
	p24FYT3 # 260	17
	p24FYT3 # 261	28
	p24FYT3 # 262	18
pFYT3 (AG-promoter/ phytase leader)	p24FYT3 # 265	12
	pFYT3 # 205	50
	pFYT3 # 282	280
	pFYT3 # 299	96
	pFYT3 # 302	220
	pFYT3 # 303	175
	pFYT3 # 304	150
	pFYT3 # 305	150
	pFYT3 # 312	140

[0159] The data clearly show high phytase expression levels in *A. niger* transformants containing the phytase gene under the control of the *A. niger* AG promoter. The data also show that the highest phytase production is obtained with the pFYT3 expression vector, which contains the phytase leader sequence. Similar expression vectors containing an intronless phytase gene after transformation to *A. niger*, resulted in phytase expression levels comparable to pFYT3 transformants of *A. niger*.

[0160] In addition, electrophoresis on an IEF-PAGE gel in the pH-range of 4.5-6 was performed on culture supernatants of transformants pFYT3 #205 and #282. Equal volumes of the culture supernatants of the *A. niger* parent strain and of both transformants, grown under identical conditions, were applied onto the gel, run and subsequently stained as described in Example 9. The parent *A. niger* produces a very low amount of phytase, which is not detected in this experiment. The strains pFYT3 #205 and #282 produce approx. 250 and 1400 times more phytase (compare phytase levels in Tables 4 and 5), and this difference is clearly visible in Figure 11. Several isoforms of the phytase enzyme are detected (indicated by an asterisk). The general protein stain indicates that the intensity of the phytase protein bands is dramatically increased, while no other major protein bands appear.

Example 11Overexpression of phytase in *A. ficuum* and *A. niger* grown on an industrial scaleA. *A. ficuum*

[0161] Strain *A. ficuum* pAF 2-2S #4 and *A. ficuum* NRRL 3135 were grown as described in Example 1. The transformant produced approximately 50 times more phytase as compared to the wild-type strain.

Table 7

Overexpression of phytase by a transformant of <i>A. ficuum</i> containing multiple phytase genes. Cells were grown as described in Example 1		
Hours after inoculation	Phytase activity <i>A. ficuum</i> NRRL 3135	(U/ml Fermentation broth) <i>A. ficuum</i> pAF 2-2S #4
0	0	0
24	0	0
92	2	142
141	5	270

B. *A. niger*

[0162] Strain *A. niger* pAF 2-2S #8, a transformant of *A. niger* strain CBS 513.88, and the parent *A. niger* strain itself were grown as described in Example 1. The transformant produced approximately 1000 times more phytase as compared to the original *A. niger* parent strain (Table 8).

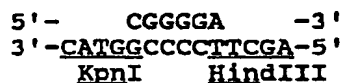
Table 8

Overexpression of phytase by a transformant of <i>A. niger</i> (CBS 513.88) containing multiple phytase genes. Cells were grown as described in Example 1		
Hours after inoculation	Phytase activity <i>A. niger</i> CBS 513.88	(U/ml fermentation broth) <i>A. niger</i> pAF 2.2 #8
0	0	0
24	0	5
92	0.1	65
141	0.1	95

Example 12

[0163] To construct the vector pREPFYT3, with which simultaneously phytase expression and AG gene replacement is achieved, pFYT3 is digested with *Kpn*I. With the obtained linear *Kpn*I DNA fragment, two separate ligations are performed.

[0164] Ligation 1 with the *Kpn*I-*Hind*III adaptor:



[0165] Ligation 2 with the *Kpn*I-*Hind*III* adaptor, in which the *Hind*III restriction site will not restore after ligation:

5' - CGGGGG -3'
 3' - CTAGGCCCTCGA -5'
 KpnI HindIII*

[0166] Subsequently, ligation 1 is partially digested with HindIII. After removal of the amdS containing fragment by gel electrophoresis, the remaining DNA fragment is recircularized by ligation and transferred to E. coli. The obtained plasmid is denoted pFYT3ΔamdS (see Figure 16).

[0167] Ligation 2 is also digested with HindIII and the 4 kb DNA HindIII/HindIII* fragment, containing the amdS gene, is isolated by gel electrophoresis, subsequently ligated to a partially HindIII digest of pFYT3ΔamdS and transferred to E. coli. The plasmid containing the amdS gene at the 3'-end of the phytase gene is denoted pFYT3INT (see Figure 17).

[0168] To introduce the approx. 6 kb Sall/HindIII DNA fragment of pAB6-1, containing the 3'-flanking AG sequence, pFYT3INT is partially digested with HindIII, ligated first to the adaptor:

5' -AGCTAGGGGG -3'
 3' - TCCCCCAGCT -5'
 HindIII* Sall

(in which the HindIII* restriction site will not restore after ligation) and subsequently with the Sall/HindIII fragment of pAB6-1. After transformation to E. coli, the desired plasmid pREPFYT3, containing the 3' AG flanking sequence at the correct position, is obtained (Figure 18).

Expression of phytase in A. niger by AG gene replacement

[0169] Before transformation of A. niger with pREPFYT3, the E. coli sequences in the plasmid are removed by HindIII digestion and gelelectrophoresis. The A. niger strain CBS 513.88 is transformed with 10 µg DNA fragment by procedures as described in Example 9. Selection and growth of transformants is performed as described in Example 9. Only a minority of the selected transformants lose AG activity (approx. 20%). Southern analysis of chromosomal DNA is performed on AG negative and phytase positive transformants to verify that the AG gene is indeed replaced by the phytase gene.

Example 13

Conservation of the phytase gene in different species

[0170] To determine whether the phytase gene is highly conserved within microbial species, Southern analyses of chromosomal DNA from ten different species were performed with the A. ficuum phytase cDNA as probe.

[0171] These chromosomal DNA analyses were performed on species from filamentous fungi, yeasts and bacteria. As an example, only a limited number from each group were chosen: for filamentous fungi, Penicillium chrysogenum and Aspergillus niger; for yeast, Saccharomyces cerevisiae and Kluyveromyces lactis; and for the procaryotic organisms, the gram-positive species, Bacillus subtilis, Clostridium thermocellum, and Streptomyces lividans, and as an example for a gram-negative bacterium, Pseudomonas aeruginosa.

[0172] High molecular weight chromosomal DNA from these species was digested with PvuII and BamHI separately and subsequently electrophorized on a 0.7% agarose gel.

[0173] After transfer to nitrocellulose filters, the hybridization was performed overnight at low stringency (6 x SSC; 50°C) with a ³²P-labeled 5'-phytase cDNA fragment (described in Example 8). Blots were washed in 6 x SSC at room temperature and exposed to X-ray for 18 hours.

[0174] As shown in Figures 19 a and b, discrete bands are observed in almost every lane, predicting a high degree of homology of the phytase gene between microbial species.

Claims

Claims for the following Contracting States : AT, BE, CH, LI, DE, DK, FR, GB, IT, LU, NL, SE

- 5 1. A DNA sequence encoding a fungal phytase which catalyses the liberation of at least one inorganic phosphate from a myoinositol phosphate, said DNA sequence being selected from the group consisting of
 - 10 (a) DNA sequences comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding the amino acid sequence as depicted in Figure 8 from position -23 to 444, or from position +1 to 444;
 - (b) DNA sequences comprising the nucleotide sequence as depicted in Figure 6 or Figure 8; and
 - (c) DNA sequences hybridizing at low stringency conditions (6 x SSC; 50° C; overnight; washing in 6 x SSC at room temperature) with a DNA fragment corresponding to a cDNA of the nucleotide sequence depicted in Figure 6 from position 210 to 1129.
- 15 2. A DNA sequence which is related to the DNA sequence of claim 1 by the degeneration of the genetic code.
3. A DNA sequence of claim 1 or 2, characterized in that it is derived from an *Aspergillus* source.
- 20 4. A DNA sequence of claim 3, characterized in that it is derived from an *Aspergillus ficuum* or an *Aspergillus niger* source.
5. An expression construct characterized in that a DNA sequence of any one of claims 1 to 4, is operably linked to a regulatory region capable of directing the expression of the phytase in a suitable expression host.
- 25 6. The expression construct of claim 5, further characterized in that the DNA sequence also contains a secretory leader sequence providing for the secretion of the phytase.
7. The expression construct of claim 6, further characterized in that the sequence encoding the secretory leader sequence is homologous to the DNA sequence.
- 30 8. The expression construct of claim 6, further characterized in that the sequence encoding the secretory leader sequence is the DNA sequence encoding the 18 amino acid or the 24 amino acid glucoamylase signal sequence.
- 35 9. The expression construct of any one of claims 5 to 8, further characterized in that the sequence encoding the secretory leader sequence is linked to the DNA sequence encoding the phytase through a short bridge.
10. The expression construct of any one of claims 5 to 9, characterized in that the regulatory region is derived from a gene selected from the group comprising the genes encoding a glucoamylase, a phytase, a fungal amylase, an acid phosphatase, and a GAPDH.
- 40 11. A vector capable of transforming a host cell characterized in that the vector contains an expression construct according to any one of claims 5 to 10.
- 45 12. The vector of claim 11, further characterized in that it is a plasmid.
13. A transformed host cell characterized in that it is transformed with a vector of claim 11 or 12.
14. The transformed host cell of claim 13 which is selected from the group consisting of bacteria, yeast and fungi.
- 50 15. The transformed host cell of claim 14 which is of the genus *Aspergillus*, *Trichoderma*, *Penicillium*, *Mucor*, *Bacillus*, *Kluyveromyces*, or *Saccharomyces*.
16. The transformed host cell of claim 15 which is an *Aspergillus niger*, *Aspergillus ficuum*, *Aspergillus awamori*, *Aspergillus oryzae*, *Trichoderma reesei*, *Mucor miehei*, *Kluyveromyces lactis*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, *Bacillus subtilis* or *Bacillus licheniformis* species.
- 55 17. A process for the production of a phytase characterized in that a transformed host cell of any one of claims 13 to

16 is cultured under conditions conducive to the production of phytase.

Claims for the following Contracting States : GR, ES

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1. A process for the preparation of a DNA sequence encoding a fungal phytase which catalyses the liberation of at least one inorganic phosphate from a myoinositol phosphate, said DNA sequence being selected from the group consisting of

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(a) DNA sequences comprising a nucleotide sequence encoding the amino acid sequence as depicted in Figure 8 from position -23 to 444, or from position +1 to 444;

(b) DNA sequences comprising the nucleotide sequence as depicted in Figure 6 or Figure 8; and

(c) DNA sequences hybridizing at low stringency conditions (6 x SSC; 50 C; overnight; washing in 6 x SSC at room temperature) with a DNA fragment corresponding to a cDNA of the nucleotide sequence depicted in Figure 6 from position 210 to 1129,

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said process comprising

(d) isolating RNA from suitable source, preparing the corresponding mRNA, constructing a cDNA library; or

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(e) isolating genomic DNA from a suitable source, constructing a genomic DNA library; and

(f) screening for and isolating the desired DNA.

2. A process for the preparation of a DNA sequence encoding a fungal phytase which catalyses the liberation of at least one inorganic phosphate from a myoinositol phosphate, comprising

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(a) isolating RNA from suitable source, preparing the corresponding mRNA, constructing a cDNA library; or

(b) isolating genomic DNA from a suitable source, constructing a genomic DNA library; and

(c) screening for and isolating the desired DNA,

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wherein said DNA sequence is related to the DNA sequence of the process of claim 1 by the degeneration of the genetic code.

3. A process of claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the DNA sequence is derived from an *Aspergillus* source.

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4. A process of claim 3, characterized in that the DNA sequence is derived from an *Aspergillus ficuum* or an *Aspergillus niger* source.

5. A process for the preparation of an expression construct comprising operably linking a DNA sequence obtainable by the process of any one of claims 1 to 4 to a regulatory region capable of directing the expression of the phytase in a suitable expression host.

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6. The process of claim 5, further characterized in that the DNA sequence also contains a secretory leader sequence providing for the secretion of the phytase.

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7. The process of claim 6, further characterized in that the sequence encoding the secretory leader sequence is homologous to the DNA sequence.

8. The process of claim 6, further characterized in that the sequence encoding the secretory leader sequence is the DNA sequence encoding the 18 amino acid or the 24 amino acid glucoamylase signal sequence.

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9. The process of any one of claims 5 to 8, further characterized in that the sequence encoding the secretory leader sequence is linked to the DNA sequence encoding the phytase through a short bridge.

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10. The process of any one of claims 5 to 9, characterized in that the regulatory region is derived from a gene selected from the group comprising the genes encoding a glucoamylase, a phytase, a fungal amylase, an acid phosphatase, and a GAPDH.

11. A process for preparing a vector capable of transforming and host cell comprising the insertion of the expression

construct obtainable by the process of any one of claims 5 to 10 into a vector.

12. The process of claim 11, further characterized in that the vector is a plasmid.

5 13. A transformed host cell characterized in that it is transformed with a vector obtainable by the process of claim 11 or 12.

14. The transformed host cell of claim 13 which is selected from the group consisting of bacteria, yeast and fungi.

10 15. The transformed host cell of claim 14 which is of the genus *Aspergillus*, *Trichoderma*, *Penicillium*, *Mucor*, *Bacillus*, *Kluyveromyces*, or *Saccharomyces*.

16. The transformed host cell of claim 15 which is an *Aspergillus niger*, *Aspergillus ficuum*, *Aspergillus awamori*, *Aspergillus oryzae*, *Trichoderma reesei*, *Mucor miehei*, *Kluyveromyces lactis*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, *Bacillus subtilis* or *Bacillus licheniformis* species.

17. A process for the production of a phytase characterized in that a transformed host cell of any one of claims 13 to 16 is cultured under conditions conducive to the production of phytase.

20 Patentansprüche

Patentansprüche für folgende Vertragsstaaten : AT, BE, CH, LI, DE, DK, FR, GB, IT, LU, NL, SE

25 1. DNA-Sequenz, die eine Phytase eines Pilzes codiert, welche die Freisetzung von mindestens einem anorganischen Phosphat aus Myoinositolphosphat katalysiert, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die DNA-Sequenz ausgewählt ist aus:

30 (a) DNA-Sequenzen, die eine die Aminosäure codierende Nucleotidsequenz von Position -23 bis 444 von Figur 8 oder von Position +1 bis 444 von Figur 8 enthalten;
(b) DNA-Sequenzen, welche die Nucleotidsequenz von Figur 6 bzw. Figur 8 enthalten; und
(c) DNA-Sequenzen, die mit einem DNA-Fragment, das einer cDNA der Nucleotidsequenz von Position 210 bis 1129 von Figur 6 entspricht unter milden Bedingungen (6 x SSC; 50°C über Nacht; Waschen in 6 x SSC bei Raumtemperatur) hybridisieren.

2. DNA-Sequenz, die aufgrund der Degeneration des genetischen Codes mit der DNA-Sequenz nach Anspruch 1 verwandt ist.

40 3. DNA-Sequenz nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sequenz von einer *Aspergillus*-Quelle abgeleitet ist.

4. DNA-Sequenz nach Anspruch 3, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sequenz von einer *Aspergillus ficuum*- oder einer *Aspergillus niger*-Quelle abgeleitet ist.

45 5. Expressionskonstrukt, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß eine DNA-Sequenz gemäß einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4 funktionell mit einem regulatorischen Bereich verbunden wird, der in der Lage ist, die Expression der Phytase in einem geeigneten Expressionswirt zu steuern.

50 6. Expressionskonstrukt nach Anspruch 5, ferner dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die DNA-Sequenz auch eine sekretorische Leadersequenz enthält, die für die Sekretion der Phytase sorgt.

7. Expressionskonstrukt nach Anspruch 6, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sequenz, welche die sekretorische Leadersequenz codiert, homolog zu der DNA-Sequenz ist.

55 8. Expressionskonstrukt nach Anspruch 6, ferner dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sequenz, welche die sekretorische Leadersequenz codiert, die DNA-Sequenz ist, welche die 18 Aminosäure- oder die 24 Aminosäure-Glucoamylase-Signalsequenz codiert.

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9. Expressionskonstrukt nach einem der Ansprüche 5 bis 8, ferner dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sequenz, welche die sekretorische Leadersequenz codiert, durch eine kurze Brücke mit der DNA-Sequenz, welche die Phytase codiert, verbunden ist.
- 5 10. Expressionskonstrukt nach einem der Ansprüche 5 bis 9, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der regulatorische Bereich von einem Gen aus einer Gruppe ausgewählt wird, welche die Gene enthält, die eine Glucoamylase, eine Phytase, eine Pilzamyrase, eine saure Phosphatase und eine GAPDH codieren.
- 10 11. Vektor, der in der Lage ist, eine Wirtszelle zu transformieren, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Vektor ein Expressionskonstrukt nach einem der Ansprüche 5 bis 10 enthält.
12. Vektor nach Anspruch 11, ferner dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Vektor ein Plasmid ist.
13. Transformierte Wirtszelle, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß sie mit einem Vektor gemäß Anspruch 11 oder 12 transformiert ist.
- 15 14. Transformierte Wirtszelle nach Anspruch 13, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß sie aus einer aus Bakterien, Hefen und Pilzen bestehenden Gruppe ausgewählt ist.
- 20 15. Transformierte Wirtszelle nach Anspruch 14, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß sie aus der Gattung *Aspergillus*, *Trichoderma*, *Penicillium*, *Mucor*, *Bacillus*, *Kluyveromyces* oder *Saccharomyces* ist.
- 25 16. Transformierte Wirtszelle nach Anspruch 15, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß sie *Aspergillus niger*, *Aspergillus ficum*, *Aspergillus awamori*, *Aspergillus oryzae*, *Trichoderma reesei*, *Mucor miehei*, *Kluyveromyces lactis*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, *Bacillus subtilis* oder *Bacillus licheniformis* ist.
17. Verfahren zur Herstellung einer Phytase, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß eine transformierte Wirtszelle nach einem der Ansprüche 13 bis 16 unter Bedingungen gezüchtet wird, die der Bildung der Phytase förderlich sind.

30 **Patentansprüche für folgende Vertragsstaaten : GR, ES**

1. Verfahren zur Herstellung einer DNA-Sequenz, die eine Phytase eines Pilzes codiert, welche die Freisetzung von mindestens einem anorganischen Phosphat aus Myoinositolphosphat katalysiert, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die DNA-Sequenz ausgewählt ist aus:
- 35 (a) DNA-Sequenzen, die eine die Aminosäure codierende Nucleotidsequenz von Position -23 bis 444 von Figur 8 oder von Position +1 bis 444 von Figur 8 enthalten;
- (b) DNA-Sequenzen, welche die Nucleotidsequenz von Figur 6 bzw. Figur 8 enthalten; und
- 40 (c) DNA-Sequenzen, die mit einem DNA-Fragment, das einer cDNA der Nucleotidsequenz von Position 210 bis 1129 von Figur 6 entspricht unter milden Bedingungen (6 x SSC; 50°C über Nacht; Waschen in 6 x SSC bei Raumtemperatur) hybridisieren,
- wobei das Verfahren umfaßt
- 45 (d) Isolieren der RNA aus einer geeigneten Quelle, Gewinnen der entsprechenden mRNA, Konstruktion einer cDNA-Bibliothek; oder
- (e) Isolieren einer genomischen DNA aus einer geeigneten Quelle, Konstruktion einer genomischen DNA-Bibliothek; und
- 50 (f) Absuchen nach und Isolieren der gewünschten DNA.
2. Verfahren zur Herstellung einer DNA-Sequenz, die eine Phytase eines Pilzes codiert, welche die Freisetzung von mindestens einem anorganischen Phosphat aus Myoinositolphosphat katalysiert, umfassend
- 55 (a) Isolieren der RNA aus einer geeigneten Quelle, Gewinnen der entsprechenden mRNA, Konstruktion einer cDNA-Bibliothek; oder
- (b) Isolieren einer genomischen DNA aus einer geeigneten Quelle, Konstruktion einer genomischen DNA-Bibliothek; und

(c) Absuchen nach und Isolieren der gewünschten DNA,

wobei die DNA-Sequenz mit der DNA-Sequenz des Verfahrens nach Anspruch 1 aufgrund der Degeneration des genetischen Codes verwandt ist.

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3. Verfahren nach Anspruch 1 oder 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sequenz von einer Aspergillus-Quelle abgeleitet ist.

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4. Verfahren nach Anspruch 3, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sequenz von einer Aspergillus ficuum- oder einer Aspergillus niger-Quelle abgeleitet ist.

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5. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines Expressionskonstrukts, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß eine gemäß dem Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 1 bis 4 erhaltene DNA-Sequenz funktionell mit einem regulatorischen Bereich verbunden wird, der in der Lage ist, die Expression der Phytase in einem geeigneten Expressionswirt zu steuern.

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6. Verfahren nach Anspruch 5, ferner dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die DNA-Sequenz auch eine sekretorische Leadersequenz enthält, die für die Sekretion der Phytase sorgt.

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7. Verfahren nach Anspruch 6, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sequenz, welche die sekretorische Leadersequenz codiert, homolog zu der DNA-Sequenz ist.

8. Verfahren nach Anspruch 6, ferner dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sequenz, welche die sekretorische Leadersequenz codiert, die DNA-Sequenz ist, welche die 18 Aminosäure- oder die 24 Aminosäure-Glucoamylase-Signalsequenz codiert.

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9. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 5 bis 8, ferner dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Sequenz, welche die sekretorische Leadersequenz codiert, durch eine kurze Brücke mit der DNA-Sequenz, welche die Phytase codiert, verbunden ist.

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10. Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 5 bis 9, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der regulatorische Bereich von einem Gen aus einer Gruppe ausgewählt wird, welche die Gene enthält, die eine Glucoamylase, eine Phytase, eine Pilzamyrase, eine saure Phosphatase und eine GAPDH codieren.

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11. Verfahren zur Herstellung eines Vektors, der in der Lage ist, eine Wirtszelle zu transformieren, die das durch das Verfahren nach einem der Ansprüche 5 bis 10 erhaltene Expressionskonstrukt enthält.

12. Verfahren nach Anspruch 11, ferner dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Vektor ein Plasmid ist.

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13. Transformierte Wirtszelle, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß sie mit einem nach dem Verfahren gemäß Anspruch 11 oder 12 erhaltenen Vektor transformiert ist.

14. Transformierte Wirtszelle nach Anspruch 13, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß sie aus einer aus Bakterien, Hefen und Pilzen bestehenden Gruppe ausgewählt ist.

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15. Transformierte Wirtszelle nach Anspruch 14, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß sie aus der Gattung Aspergillus, Trichoderma, Penicillium, Mucor, Bacillus, Kluyveromyces oder Saccharomyces ist.

16. Transformierte Wirtszelle nach Anspruch 15, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß sie Aspergillus niger, Aspergillus ficuum, Aspergillus awamori, Aspergillus oryzae, Trichoderma reesei, Mucor miehei, Kluyveromyces lactis, Saccharomyces cerevisiae, Bacillus subtilis oder Bacillus licheniformis ist.

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17. Verfahren zur Herstellung einer Phytase, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß eine transformierte Wirtszelle nach einem der Ansprüche 13 bis 16 unter Bedingungen gezüchtet wird, die der Bildung der Phytase förderlich sind.

Revendications

Revendications pour les Etats contractants suivants : AT, BE, CH, LI, DE, DK, FR, GB, IT, LU, NL, SE

- 5 1. Une séquence d'ADN codant une phytase fongique qui catalyse la libération d'au moins un phosphate inorganique à partir d'un phosphate de myoinositol, cette dite séquence d'ADN étant sélectionnée dans le groupe constitué par:
 - 10 (a) des séquences d'ADN qui comprennent une séquence nucléotidique codant la séquence d'acides aminés décrite à la figure 8 depuis la position -23 jusqu'à 444, ou depuis la position +1 jusqu'à 444;
 - (b) des séquences d'ADN qui comprennent la séquence nucléotidique décrite à la figure 6 ou à la figure 8; et
 - (c) des séquences d'ADN qui s'hybrident dans des conditions de stringence faible (6 x SSC; 50°C; pendant la nuit; lavages dans 6 x SSC à température ambiante) à une sonde correspondant à l'ADN complémentaire comprenant la séquence nucléotidique depuis la position 210 jusqu'à la position 1129 décrite à la figure 6.
- 15 2. Une séquence d'ADN dérivée de la séquence d'ADN selon la revendication 1 par dégénérescence du code génétique.
- 20 3. Une séquence d'ADN selon les revendications 1 ou 2, caractérisée en ce que la séquence provient d'une source d'*Aspergillus*.
4. Une séquence d'ADN selon la revendication 3, caractérisée en ce que la séquence provient d'une source d'*Aspergillus ficuum* ou d'*Aspergillus niger*.
- 25 5. Un produit de synthèse destiné à l'expression, caractérisé en ce qu'une séquence d'ADN selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 4, est opérationnellement liée à une région régulatrice capable de diriger l'expression de phytase dans un hôte d'expression approprié.
- 30 6. Un produit de synthèse destiné à l'expression, selon la revendication 5, caractérisé en outre en ce que la séquence d'ADN contient également une séquence leader sécrétrice assurant la sécrétion de la phytase.
7. Un produit de synthèse destiné à l'expression selon la revendication 6, caractérisé en outre en ce que la séquence encodant la séquence leader sécrétrice est homologue de la séquence d'ADN.
- 35 8. Un produit de synthèse destiné à l'expression selon la revendication 6, caractérisé en outre en ce que la séquence codant la séquence leader sécrétrice est sélectionnée dans le groupe constitué par les séquences d'ADN codant les séquences signal à 18 acides aminés ou 24 acides aminés de la glucoamylase.
- 40 9. Un produit de synthèse destiné à l'expression selon l'une quelconque des revendications 5 à 8, caractérisé en outre en ce que la séquence codant la séquence leader sécrétrice est liée à la séquence d'ADN codant la phytase par un pont court.
- 45 10. Un produit de synthèse destiné à l'expression selon l'une quelconque des revendications 5 à 9, caractérisé en ce que la région régulatrice provient d'un gène sélectionné dans le groupe comprenant les gènes codant une glucoamylase, une phytase, une amylase fongique, une phosphatase acide, et une GAPDH.
11. Un vecteur capable de transformer une cellule hôte, caractérisé en ce que le vecteur contient un produit de synthèse destiné à l'expression selon l'une quelconque des revendications 5 à 10.
- 50 12. Le vecteur selon la revendication 11, caractérisé en outre en ce que le vecteur est un plasmide.
13. Une cellule hôte transformée, caractérisée en ce que la cellule hôte est transformée au moyen d'un vecteur selon les revendications 11 ou 12.
- 55 14. La cellule hôte transformée selon la revendication 13, laquelle est sélectionnée dans le groupe constitué par des bactéries, des levures et des champignons.
15. La cellule hôte transformée selon la revendication 14, laquelle est d'un genre sélectionné dans le groupe constitué

par *Aspergillus*, *Trichoderma*, *Penicillium*, *Mucor*, *Bacillus*, *Kluyveromyces*, ou *Saccharomyces*.

16. La cellule hôte transformée selon la revendication 15, laquelle est d'une espèce sélectionnée dans le group constitué par *Aspergillus niger*, *Aspergillus ficuum*, *Aspergillus awamori*, *Aspergillus oryzae*, *Trichoderma reesei*, *Mucor miehei*, *Kluyveromyces lactis*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, *Bacillus subtilis* ou *Bacillus licheniformis*.

17. Un procédé de production d'une phytase caractérisé en ce que la cellule hôte transformée selon l'une quelconque des revendications 13 à 16 est cultivée dans des conditions aboutissant à la production de la phytase.

Revendications pour les Etats contractants suivants : ES, GR

1. Un procédé de préparation d'une séquence d'ADN codant une phytase fongique qui catalyse la libération d'au moins un phosphate inorganique à partir d'un phosphate de myoinositol, cette dite séquence étant sélectionnée dans le groupe constitué par:

- (a) des séquences d'ADN qui comprennent une séquence nucléotidique codant la séquence d'acides aminés décrite à la Figure 8 depuis la position -23 jusqu'à 444, ou depuis la position +1 jusqu'à 444;
- (b) des séquences d'ADN qui comprennent la séquence nucléotidique décrite à la Figure 6 ou à la Figure 8; et
- (c) des séquences d'ADN qui s'hybrident dans des conditions de stringence faible (6 x SSC; 50°C; pendant la nuit; lavages dans 6 x SSC à température ambiante) à une sonde correspondant à l'ADN complémentaire comprenant la séquence nucléotidique décrite à la Figure 6 depuis la position 210 jusqu'à 1129.

ce dit procédé comprenant

- (d) l'isolation de l'ARN d'une source appropriée, la préparation de l'ARN messenger correspondant, la construction d'une banque d'ADN complémentaire; ou
- (e) l'isolation de l'ADN génomique d'une source appropriée, la construction d'une banque d'ADN génomique; et
- (f) le criblage de la banque et l'isolation de l'ADN désiré.

2. Un procédé de préparation d'une séquence d'ADN codant une phytase fongique qui catalyse la libération d'au moins un phosphate inorganique à partir d'un phosphate de myoinositol, comprenant:

- (a) l'isolation de l'ARN d'une source appropriée, la préparation de l'ARN messenger correspondant, la construction d'une banque d'ADN complémentaire; ou
- (b) l'isolation de l'ADN génomique d'une source appropriée, la construction d'une banque d'ADN génomique; et
- (c) le criblage de la banque et l'isolation de l'ADN désiré, cette dite séquence d'ADN étant dérivée de la séquence d'ADN obtenue selon le procédé de la revendication 1 par dégénérescence du code génétique.

3. Un procédé selon les revendications 1 ou 2, caractérisé en ce que la séquence d'ADN provient d'une source d'*Aspergillus*.

4. Un procédé selon la revendication 3, caractérisé en ce que la séquence d'ADN provient d'une source d'*Aspergillus ficuum* ou d'*Aspergillus niger*.

5. Un procédé de préparation d'un produit de synthèse destiné à l'expression comprenant la liaison opérationnelle de la séquence d'ADN obtenue selon l'un quelconque des procédés des revendications 1 à 4 à une région régulatrice capable de diriger l'expression de phytase dans un hôte d'expression approprié.

6. Le procédé selon la revendication 5, caractérisé en outre en ce que la séquence d'ADN contient également une séquence leader sécrétrice assurant la sécrétion de la phytase.

7. Le procédé selon la revendication 6, caractérisé en outre en ce que la séquence encodant la séquence leader sécrétrice est homologue de la séquence d'ADN.

8. Le procédé selon la revendication 6, caractérisé en outre en ce que la séquence encodant la séquence leader sécrétrice est sélectionnée dans le groupe constitué par les séquences d'ADN codant les séquences signal à 18 acides aminés ou 24 acides aminés de la glucoamylase.

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9. Le procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 5 à 8, caractérisé en outre en ce que la séquence codant la séquence leader sécrétrice est liée à la séquence d'ADN codant la phytase par un pont court.
- 5 10. Le procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 5 à 9, caractérisé en ce que la région régulatrice provient d'un gène sélectionné dans le groupe comprenant les gènes codant une glucoamylase, une phytase, une amylase fongique, une phosphatase acide et une GAPDH.
- 10 11. Un procédé de préparation d'un vecteur capable de transformer une cellule hôte, comprenant l'insertion du produit de synthèse destiné à l'expression obtenu par le procédé selon l'une quelconque des revendications 5 à 10 dans le vecteur.
12. Le procédé selon la revendication 11, caractérisé en outre en ce que le vecteur est un plasmide.
- 15 13. Une cellule hôte transformée caractérisée en ce que la cellule hôte est transformée au moyen d'un vecteur obtenu par le procédé selon les revendications 11 ou 12.
14. La cellule hôte transformée selon la revendication 13, laquelle est sélectionnée dans le groupe constitué par des bactéries, des levures et des champignons.
- 20 15. La cellule hôte transformée selon la revendication 14, laquelle est d'un genre sélectionné dans le groupe constitué par *Aspergillus*, *Trichoderma*, *Penicillium*, *Mucor*, *Bacillus*, *Kluyveromyces*, ou *Saccharomyces*.
- 25 16. La cellule hôte transformée selon la revendication 15, laquelle est d'une espèce sélectionnée dans le groupe constitué par *Aspergillus niger*, *Aspergillus ficuum*, *Aspergillus awamori*, *Aspergillus oryzae*, *Trichoderma reesei*, *Mucor miehei*, *Kluyveromyces lactis*, *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*, *Bacillus subtilis* ou *Bacillus licheniformis*.
- 30 17. Un procédé de production d'une phytase caractérisé en ce que la cellule hôte transformée selon l'une quelconque des revendications 13 à 16 est cultivée dans des conditions aboutissant à la production de la phytase.

N-TERMINAL AMINOACID SEQUENCES

	A	B	C
POSITION			
01			LEU
02			ALA
03			VAL
04			PRO
05		ALA	ALA
06		SER	SER
07		---	ARG
08	----**	---	ASN
09	GLN	GLN	GLN
10	SER	SER	SER
11	SER	SER	SER
12	---	---	GLY
13	ASP	ASP	ASP
14	THR	THR	THR
15	VAL	VAL	VAL
16	ASP	ASP	ASP
17	GLN	GLN	
18		GLY	
19		TYR	
20		GLN	
21		ARG	
22		PHE	
23		SER	
24		GLU	
25		THR	
26		SER	
27		HIS	
28		LEU	
29		ARG	
30		(GLY)*	
31		GLN	
32		TYR	
33		ALA	
34		PRO	
35		PHE	
36		PHE	
37		(ASP)	
38		LEU	
39		ALA	

Fig. 1A

PEPTIDE AMINOACID SEQUENCES

A B C D E

POSITION

01	GLN	(TRP)•	MET	ALA	VAL
02	-----	SER	MET	SER	VAL
03	GLN	PHE	GLN	SER	ASP
04	ALA	ASP	CYS	ALA	---
05	GLU	THR	GLN	GLU	ARG
06	GLN	ILE	ALA	LYS	PHE
07	GLU	SER	GLU	GLY	PRO
08	PRO	THR	GLN	TYR	TYR
09	LEU	SER	GLU	ASP	THR
10	VAL	THR	PRO	LEU	GLY
11	(ARG)	VAL	LEU	VAL	---
12	VAL	ASP	VAL	VAL	ALA
13	LEU	THR	ARG		
14	VAL	LYS	VAL		
15	ASN	LEU	LEU		
16	(ASP)	SER	VAL		
17	(ARG)	PRO	ASN		
18	(VAL)	PHE	ASP		
19	VAL	(CYS)	ARG		
20	PRO	(ASP)			
21		LEU			
22		PHE			
23		THR			

FIG. 1B

N-TERMINUS 100KD PROTEIN

POSITION

01	VAL
02	VAL
03	ASP
04	GLU
05	ARG
06	PHE
07	PRO
08	TYR
09	THR
10	GLY

FIG. 1C

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Peptide C :	Leu	Ala	Val	Pro	Ala	Ser	Arg	Asn	Gln	Ser	Ser	Gly	Asp	Thr	Val	Asp				
Peptide B :	Ala	Ser	Pro	Pro	Pro	Ser	Ser	Asp	Thr	Val	Asp	Gly	Gly	Tyr	Gln					
Peptide A :	Pro	Gln	Ser	Ser	Ser	Asp	Thr	Val	Asp	Gln										
Possible																				
codons :	5'-CTG	GGG	GTC	CCG	CCG	TCC	CCG	AAT	CAT	TCC	GGG	GAT	ACG	GTC	GAT	CAT	GGG	TAT	CAT	
	A	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	G	A	A	C	A	A	C	G	A	C	G	
	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	
	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	
	TTA							AGT	AGA											
	G							C	G											
AB1024 :	3'-CCG	CAG	GGG	CCG	TCC	GGG	TTG	GTC	TCC	TCC	CCG	CTG	CTG	TCC	CAG	CTG	GTC			
AB1065 :																				
AB1066 :																				
AB1067 :																				
AB1068 :																				
AB1069 :																				
AB1070 :																				
AB1226 :																				
AB1227 :																				
AB1298 :																				
Peptide B :	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	
	(Arg)	Phe	Ser	Ser	Ala	Thr	Ser	His	Leu	Arg	(Gly)	Gln	Tyr	Ala	Pro	Phe	(Asp)	Leu	Ala	
	CCG	-TTT	-TCC	ACG	ACG	TCC	CAT	CTG	CCG	GGG	-CAG	TAT	GGG	CCG	TTT	-TTT	-GAT	-CTG	GGG	
	T	A	C	A	A	A	A	C	A	A	A	C	A	C	A	C	C	C	A	A
	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	
	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	
	AGG	AGT																		
	A																			
AB1388 :																				
	3'-	CCG	-GTC	ATG	CCG	GGG	AGG	-MAG	-CTG	-GA										

Figure 2A

Figure 2B

codons :

AB1025 :
AB1026 :

AB1027 :

3'-ATG-CCG-CCG-CCG-TAA-GGC-GTC

Figure 3

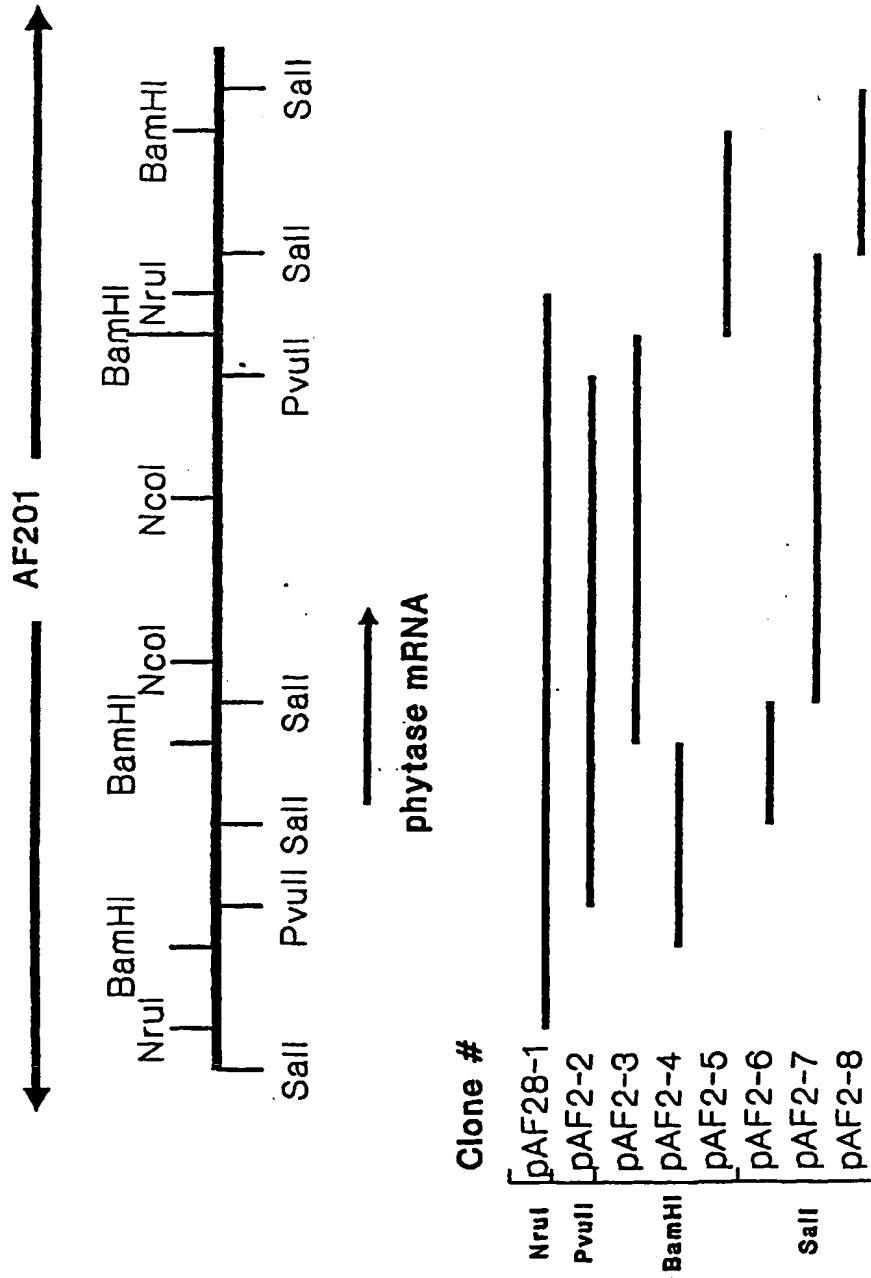


Figure 4

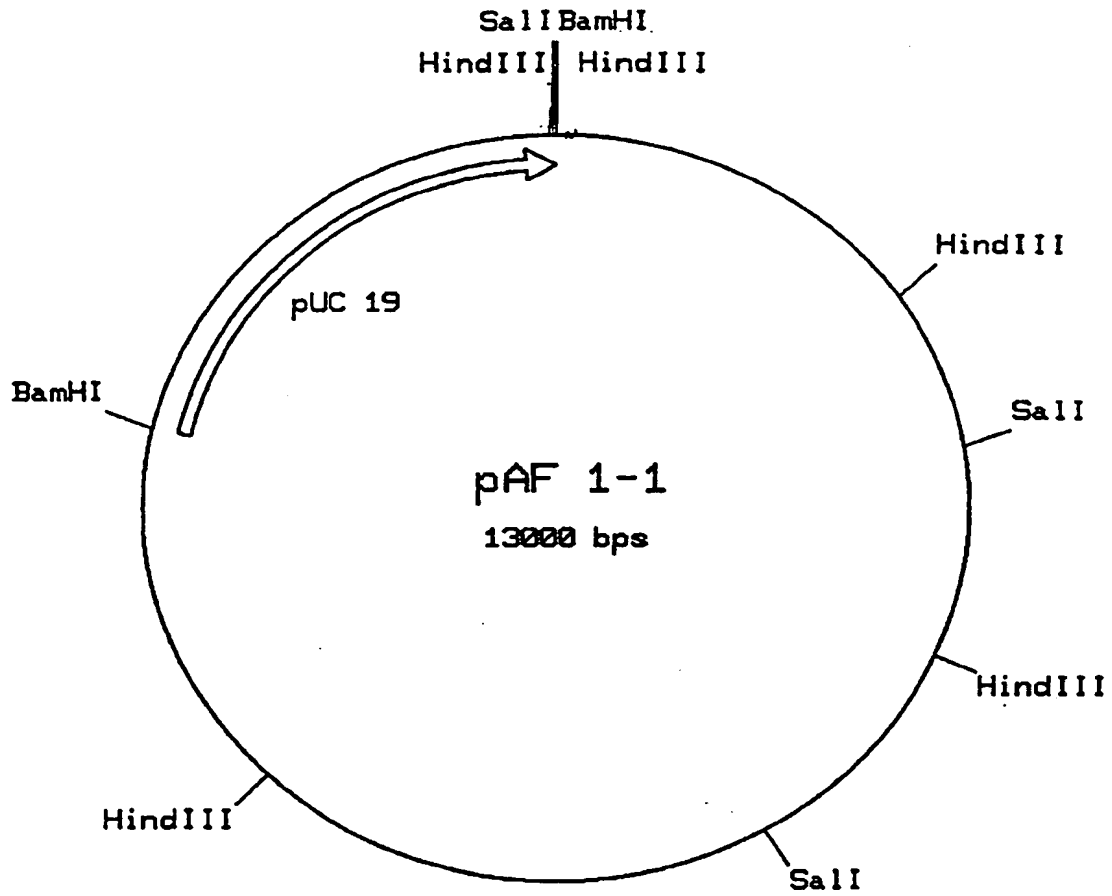


Figure 5

40

Figure 6 (continued 1)

1081 TGACCTACCTCATGGACATGTGCTCCTTCGACACCATCTCCACCAGCACCGTTCGACACCA
SalI

1141 AGCTGTCCCCCTTCTGTGACCTGTTCACCCATGACGAATGGATCAACTACGACTACCTCC

1201 AGTCCTTGAAAAAGTATTACGGCCATGTTGCAGGTAACCCGCTCGGCCCGACCCAGGGCG

1261 TCGGCTACGCTAACGAGCTCATCGCCCGTCTGACCCACTCGCCTGTCCACGATGACACCA

1321 GTTCCAACCACACTTTGGACTCGAGCCCGGCTACCTTTCCGCTCAACTCTACTCTCTACG

1381 CGGACTTTTCGCATGACAACGGCATCATCTCCATTCTCTTTGCTTTAGGTCTGTACAACG

1441 GCACTAAGCCGCTATCTACCACGACCGTGGAGAATATCACCCAGACAGATGGATTCTCGT

1501 CTGCTTGGACGGTTCGGTTTGCTTCGCGTTTGATCGTCGAGATGATGCAGTGTCAGGGCG

1561 AGCAGGAGCCGCTGGTCCGTGTCTTGGTTAATGATCGCGTTGTCCCGCTGCATGGGTGTC

1621 CGGTTGATGCTTTTGCGAGATGTACCCGGGATAGCTTTGTGAGGGGGTTGAGCTTTGCTA

1681 GATCTGGGGGTGATTGGCCGAGTGTTTTGCTTAGCTGAATTACCTTGATGAATGGTATG
translation stop

1741 TATCACAATTGCATATCATTAGCACTTCAGGTATGTATTATCGAAGATGTATATCGAAAGG

1801 ATCAATGGTGACTGTCACTGGTTATCTGAATATCCCTCTATACCTCGTCCACAACCAAT

1861 CATCACCCCTTTAAACAATCACACTCAACGCACAGCGTACAAACGAACAAACGCACAAAGA

1921 ATATTTTACACTCCTCCCCAACGCAATACCAACCGCAATTCATCATACCTCATATAAATA

1981 CAATACAATACAATACATCCATCCCTACCCTCAAGTCCACCCATCCTATAATCAATCCCT

2041 ACTTACTTACTTCTCCCCCTCCCCCTCACCGTTCCCAAGAACTACCCCCGAAGTAGTAAT

2101 AGTAGTAGTAGAAGAAGCAGACGACCTCTCCACCAATCTCTTCGGCCTCTTATCCCCATA

Figure 6 (continued 2)

2161 CGCTACACAAAACCCCCACCCCGTTAGCATGCACTCAGAAAATAATCAAAAATAACTAAG
2221 AAGGAAAAAAGAAAGAAAGGTTACATACTCCTCTCATACAACTCCAAGACGTATA
2281 CATCAAGATGGGCAATCCCAQCATTACTGATATCCATCTATGAACCCATTCCCATCCAC
2341 GTTAGTTGATTACTTTACTTAGAAGAAGAAAAAGGGAAGGGAAGGAAAGAGTGGATGG
2401 GATTGAGTTAGTGCTCACCCTCTCGCAGCAAGTTTATATTCTTTTGGTGGCGATATCT
2461 TTCACTGCTCCTGCTGGACGTTGTACGGGGTGGTAGTGGTTGGCGGTGGTGAGGGTCCA
2521 TGATCACTCTTGGTTTGGGGGGTTGTTGTGTGTCGTTGTTGTTGTTGGGTGGGCATTT
2581 TCTTTTCTTCACTTGGGGATTATTATTGGAATTGGTTAGTTTGAGTGAGTGGTAATAT
2641 TGAATGGGTGATTATTGGGAATGAAGTAGATTTGGCTATGAATGGTTGATGGGATGGAAT
2701 GAATGGATGGATGAATAGATGGAGCCGAAAAAGTCAGGTGGTTTGAGGTTCCGATTATTA
2761 TCTTTGTGCTGAGGCATCACTCTCCATCTATGTTGTTCTTTCTATACCGATCTACCAGA
2821 GCTAAGTTGACTGATTCTACCACAGTGCACAATAAGTATGTACTTATTTCAATTAGAGTA
2881 TTTAGATTAAACCGCTGTGCTATTTGCCGTAGCTTTCCACCCAATTTGGAAGTTCGAAGA
2941 ATTAAACTCATCCTACAGTACAGAATAGAAGTAAAAGGAGAAGAGAAAAACAAGATAAT
3001 ACAACCACTCCAGGTCCATTCTAGATCTCGAATGACCACCAAATAAGAAAGCAACAAGCA
3061 AGTAAGCAAAGCATAAGTCTAAATGAACGCCAATAACTTCATCGCCTGCCTTTGAAACTG
3121 AACGCTATGCACGAATGGCTCGAAATGATTCCCTTAAGTCCGTAGTATTGAGAGTGAGAG
3181 GAAAAGAAAAAAGAGACAGAAAAGCTGACCATGGGAAAGAAGCATGATCAGTCGGGAAT

Figure 6 (continued 3)

3241 GGATCTGCGGGTTGAGATAGATATGAGTTGCCTCGCAGATCCGGTGACAAGATAAGAGAA
3301 TTGGGAGATGTGATCAGCCACTGTAAC TTCATCAAGCATCGACATTCAACGGTCGGGTCT
3361 GCGGGTTGAGATGCAAGTTGAGATGCCACGCAGACCCGAACAGAGTGAGAGATGTGAGAC
3421 TTTTGAACCACTGTGACTTCATCAAGCATCAAAACACACTCCATGGTCAATCGGTTAGGG
3481 TGTGAGGGTTGATATGCCAGGTTGATGCCACGCAGACCCGAACCGACTGAGAAATATGA
3541 AAAGTTGGACAGCCACTTCATCTTCATCAAGCGTAAAACCCCAATCAATGGTAAATCGAA
3601 AACGAATCTGCGGGCTGATGTGAAATGAGACGAATGCCTCGCAGATTGGAAGACACGTA
3661 AATCGAGATGAACAATCACTTTAACTTCATCAAAGCCTTAAATCACCCAATGGCCAGTCT
3721 ATTGCGGTCTGCGGGTTGAGGTTCCCTGTTGAGATGCCACGCAGACTGCGAACATGCGATG
3781 CATTATAAGTTGGACGAGTGTAGACTGACCATTGATAACCGAGATAAACAATCACTTCAA
3841 CTTTCATCAAAGCCTTAAATCACTCAATGGCCAGTCTGTTTGCGGTCTGCGGGCTGATACC
3901 CAAATTGCGATGCCACGCAGACTGCAAACATTGATCGAGAGACGAGAAAAACAACGCACT
3961 TTAAGTTCAACAAAAGCCTTTCAATCAGTCAATGGCCAGTCTGTTCCCGGTCTGCGGGCT
4021 GATATGCGAGTTGAGGTGCCTCGCAGACCCGAACATGCGATGTAATTTCTTAGTTAGAC
4081 GAGTGCCTGGCCATTGAGAAAACGAGAGAAACAACCACTTTAACTTCATGAAAGCCTTGAA
4141 CTA CTCAATGACCCGTCTGTTGGCGGTCTGCGGGCTGATATTGAGTTGAGATGCCACGC
4201 AGACCGCCAACATGCGATGTATCATGTAAGTTAGATGACTGACTGGCCATTGAGAAACGA
4261 GAGAAACAACCACACTTCATGAGAGCCTTAAATTATTCAATGACCAGTCTGTTACGGTC

Figure 6 (continued 4)

4321 TGC GGGTTGGTATGCGAGTCGAGGTGCCTCGCAGACCGCAACATGCGATGTTTTCGATG
4381 GACGAGTGAAGCCTGACGATCGAGAACTATCTCAGTTGGGTTGGCCATTCCGGCTGCCCGT
4441 TGGGTTTAGTATTAGGATCGTTCAGGTTTGTCCGATGGAACGTTCCGTTTGGGTGCGTTGG
4501 CGCGACGAGCCCTCTCCTCGGCCTGATTCTGAAATTCTGCAATCAGGGCAGCCGCAGCAC
4561 GCGGACGGGACGTCCTCCAGGAGCTGTGTTGAAGTTTCGGGGTGGCGGTCCAGAAGGGGG
4621 AGTTACATTAAAAGCCTCATAGATGTCCTTTGGGTGGTTCCGGGGGCCCATCGCAAGATC
4681 TTCTGGAGTTGTGCGTCTGATCATCTCTTGAGTGTAATTGCGACCGCAGACCGAGCTTCAG
4741 GATTTTGGAAGGGCTGGATCGCTCCTGCTGACTCTTTCCCTCAGCGGGCTTCGTCTCGGC
4801 AGTCTTCATTTCCGGGGCTGATCTTCCATCTCAGAATGGGATCGCTTTCTGGTCTGCTGC
4861 ACCCGCTCCTCCCTTCAAGGTCAGCTTGATCGCAGCGTCTTGGCGGGCTCAGCTGGTGG
4921 AGTTGGTTCCGGCTCTGGCTCCCTCCGGCGTGGCTTGGGCACTTGAGTAGTCTCTGAGGC
4981 TTCGCCGGCGCGCGTTTTCGAGTCGGCTCCTTGGTCTCTTTGGCCTCTTTCACCTCACC
5041 TGGACCGTCTTTCCGGGCGGTTTCATCGTCTGAGCGATCAAGGTTTGATGTAGGCAGC
5101 CGGCATCATTCGATCAACGGCAATTCTCTCTTGCGGGCCTCCTCCGAGCCTTGATTGT
5161 CGCCTTGACCTCGTCCACGTTTTTCGAAGAAGAAAGGCATCTTGTTATCCTGAGGCAAGTT
5221 GCGCTCTCCCATGCGTGGGATATCCGAAGATGCGGTCTTCTCGAACTGTTTCATGAGAC
5281 TTCAGACGAATTGGAGGCTGGGGGAGCAATTTGTCTCCGTAGGTGTTGTTAGGGCGGAAC
5341 CAAGAATAGCCTTCGCCTACAACGACAAGCTCTTCGCCAAATTTATTTTTTGGCCTGTA

Figure 6 (continued 5)

5401 AAAACGAACCCATCCTCGTCAGTCCACCGGTGCGTCTCGGACGTAGAGATTGGCTTACTT
 5461 ATTCCCTCAACGCCGATCTCTGCCTGGGGCTGCGCTTCGGATGCGGCCCTCGGTACGGCT
 5521 CCGCCTCGGACTGCACCGCTGGAGTTTCGGTCTTCTTCTCCTGCTTCTCCAGGTACTCCT
 5581 TGCCTAACTCTTCGATCAGCCTCGGCTTCGGATGACTGCTCAAATTCTGGAGCAACAGCT
 5641 GCCCGCGGCCAGGTCAAGCAGCGGTTTGCTAAAACTGCCCATTTTCCATCGACACCTGCC
 5701 TCCGACGCCTGTGCAAAACCAGCTGTTTTCGCATTGCGCTGTTTQTTGGCAGCGTCTTC
 5761 TTGACTGCTGCCTTGCCCTTTACTTCCTTGAGAGCAGACTCTGGCTTAGATGATGGTGCA
 5821 CGGTTTCTCGGAAAGCGCGCTCAGATTCCAAAGATTCCATAGCTTTAATGGTAGGCTTT
 5881 CTGGTTCTTCCAGAAGTGC CGCGCAGCTGACGTAGTGGTTGAGTAGCTGCCAGTTGGGGAT
 5941 CCGGGCCCTCATTGGAAACCATCAAGACCAAATTTGTTTCCATACATATCAGCATGGTAT
 6001 TCAAAAGGAAAACTTTCGCCGTACCGAGTACTCGGTTCCGATTCCGGGTGTATCCAAGTCG
 6061 TATCCAGACATGGTGTGCAATTACGCCCTTCTGTCAAGAGCAGGGGTACTTTCAATGCTG
 6121 TCAGCAACCACCGGCCAAAGGGCTCTTTCGGGAAAGAGGTGTTTCAAGAGAAACCTCA
 6181 TCCACGGCCTGGCTTGC CGCGTTGATTGCAGACTTTTCGAGTAGATCGCTGAGGTGCGGAA
 6241 CTGGTTGAGTAGCAACCTGTGAATTGGCAGCCTTGTGACTGCTTCGATTCACTGCAGAG
 6301 ACGGAGTAGACTGCAGTGATTTGGAATTCTGAGTCGCAGCCATTCTCGAATTTGCGTTCCG
 6361 CGCGACGAGATCTCGCAGTCTGTGTACGAGGAGTAGAGCGAGGCTGCGTAGCAGTGTTCG
 6421 AAGCTTGGTCTAGCCTCCTGGGCTTCAGCAGCTTCAGCAGTGGTGGCAGACCGCAGCAGA

Figure 6 (continued 6)

6481 ATTAGCGGAGCTTTATCGGCTTTGCCGCTCTGAGCGTTGGGAGTAGAAGTGAGAGAAGAG
6541 GTAGAGTCCACGGAAGAAGTCTTCTCGCTGTTCTCAAAGCCGTTTCAGCTTTGCTGGCATA
6601 GACTTACGCGTCTTGCGGCTGTTGGAAGCGGAAGAGTTCATGGCGGGAGAGGAGACGTTA
6661 GAAGTAGACATGGTGGGGTTTGTGACGGGTTTTGAGTAACAAGAGACTTGGGTCGATCT
6721 TTGAGTGTTCTTGACAGAAAGTTATCCAACGTCGAC
Sall

phytase locus

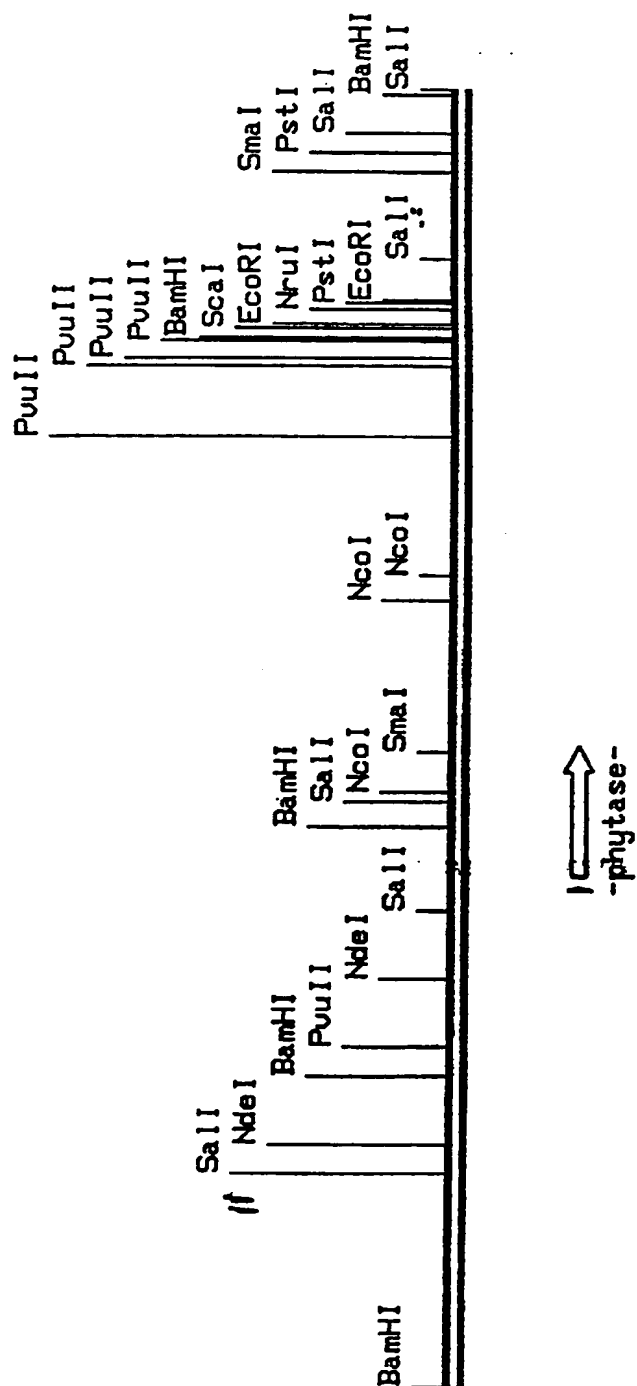


Figure 7

Figure 8

1 ATGGGGCTCTCTGCTGTTCTACTTCCTTTGTATCTCCTGTCTGGAGTCACCTCCGGACTG
 -23 M G V S A V L L P L Y L L S G V T S G L

 61 GCAGTCCCCGCTCGAGAAATCAATCCAGTTGCGATACGGTCGATCAGGGGTATCAATGC
 A V P A S R N Q S S C D T V D Q G Y Q C
 -1 +1

 121 TTCTCCGAGACTTCGCATCTTTGGGGTCAATACGCACCGTTCTTCTCTCTGGCAAACGAA
 18 F S E T S H L W G Q Y A P F F S L A N E

 181 TCGGTCATCTCCCTGAGGTGCCCGCCGGATGCAGAGTCACTTTCTGCTCAGGTCTCTCTCC
 38 S V I S P E V P A G C R V T F A Q V L S

 241 CGTCATGGAGCGCGGTATCCGACCGACTCCAAGGGCAAGAAATACTCCGCTCTCATTGAG
 58 R H Q A R Y P T D S K G K K Y S A L I E

 301 GAGATCCAGCAGAACCGGACCACTTTGACGGAAATATGCCTTCCTGAAGACATACAAC
 78 E I Q Q N A T T F D G K Y A F L K T Y N

 361 TACAGCTTGGGTGCAGATGACCTGACTCCCTTCGGAGAACAGGAGCTAGTCAACTCCGGC
 98 Y S L G A D D L T P F G E Q E L V N S G

 421 ATCAAGTTCTACCAGCGGTACGAATCGCTCACAAGGAACATCGTTCATTTCATCCGATCC
 118 I K F Y Q R Y E S L T R N I V P F I R S

 481 TCTGGCTCCAGCCCGGTGATCCGCTCCGGCAAGAAATTCATCGAGGGCTTCAGAGCACC
 138 S G S S R V I A S G K K F I E G F Q S T

 541 AAGCTGAAGGATCCTCGTGCCAGCCCGGCCAATCGTCGCCCAAGATCGACGTGGTCATT
 158 K L K D P R A Q P G Q S S P K I D V V I

 601 TCCGAGGCCAGCTCATCCAACAACACTCTCGACCCAGGCACCTGCACTGTCTTGAAGAC
 178 S E A S S S N N T L D P G T C T V F E D

 661 AGCGAATTGGCCGATACCGTCGAAGCCAATTTACCGCCACGTTGGTCCCTCCATTGGT
 198 S E L A D T V E A N F T A T F V P S I R

 721 CAACGTCTGGAGAACGACCTGTCCGGTGTGACTCTCAGAGACACAGAAGTGACCTACCTC
 218 Q R L E N D L S G V T L T D T E V T Y L

 781 ATGGACATGTGCTCCTTCGACACCATCTCCACCAAGCAGCGTCGACACCAAGCTGTCCCCC
 238 M D M C S F D T I S T S T V D T K L S P

Figure 8 (continued 1)

841 TTCTGTGACCTGTTACCCATGACGAATGGATCAACTACGACTACCTCCAGTCCTTGAAA
258 F C D L F T H D E W I N Y D Y L Q S L K

901 AAGTATTACGGCCATGGTGCAGGTAACCCGCTCGGCCCGACCCAGGGCGTCGGCTACGCT
278 K Y Y G H G A G N P L G P T Q G V G Y A

961 AACGAGCTCATCGCCCGTCTGACCCACTCGCCTGTCCACGATGACACCAGTTCCAACCAC
298 N E L I A R L T H S P V H D D T S S N H

1021 ACTTTGGA CTGAGCCCGGCTACCTTTCCGCTCAACTCTACTCTCTACGGGACTTTTCG
318 T L D S S P A T F P L N S T L Y A D F S

1081 CATGACAACGGCATCATCTCCATTCTCTTTGCTTTAGGTCTGTACAACGGCACTAAGCCG
338 H D N G I I S I L F A L G L Y N G T K P

1141 CTATCTACCACGACCGTGGAGAATATCACCCAGACAGATGGATTCTCTGTCTGCTTGGACG
358 L S T T T V E N I T Q T D G F S S A W T

1201 GTTCCGTTTCTCTCGCGTTTGTACGTGAGATGATGCAGTGTTCAGGCGGAGCAAGAGCCG
378 V P F A S R L Y V E M M Q C Q A E Q E P

1261 CTGGTCCGTGTCTTGGTTAATGATCGCGTTGTCCCGCTGCATGGGTGTCCGTTGATGCT
398 L V R V L V N D R V V P L H G C P V D A

1321 TTGGGGAGATGTACCCGGGATACTTTGTGAGGGGGTTGAGCTTTGCTAGATCTGGGGGT
418 L G R C T R D S F V R G L S F A R S G G

1381 GATTGGGCGGAGTGTCTTCTTAG
438 D W A E C F A *

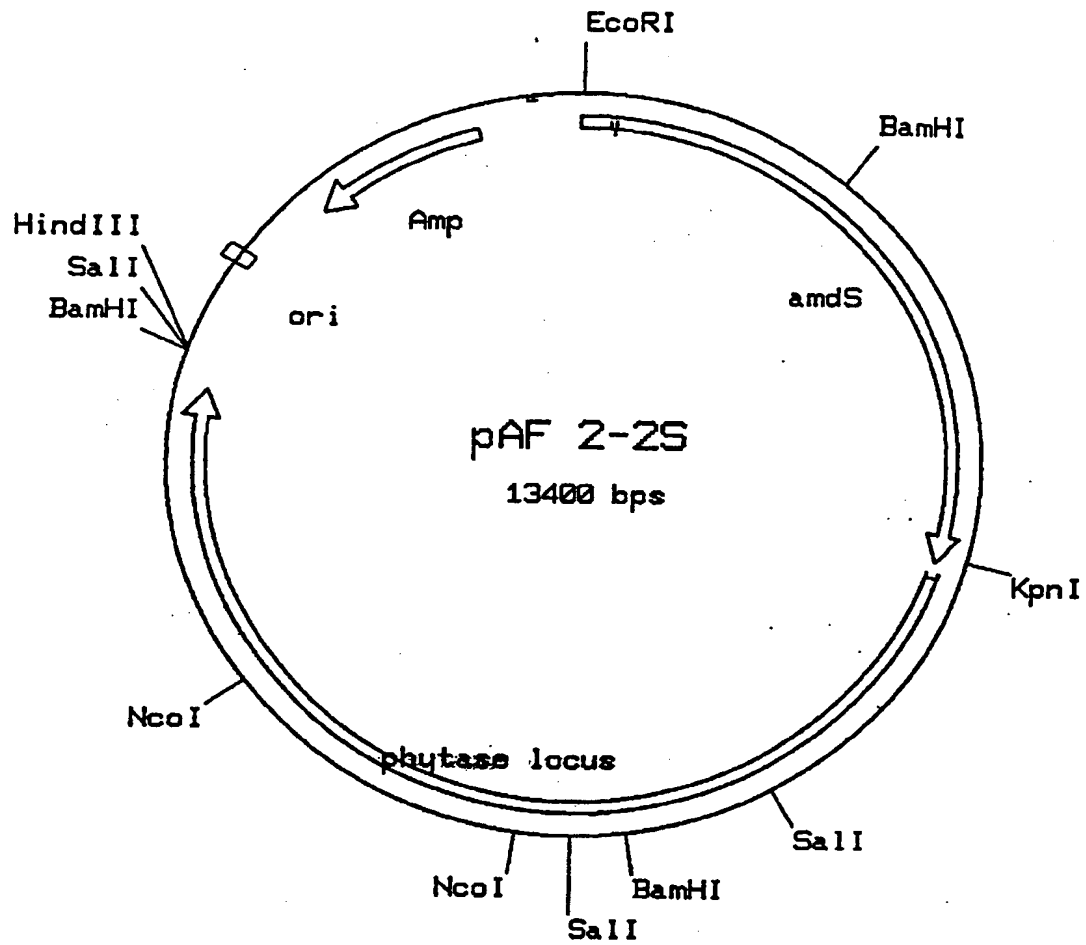


Figure 9

A

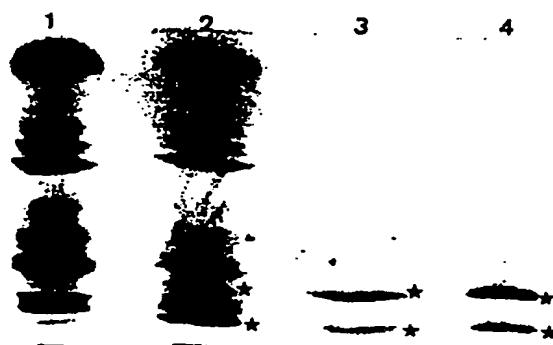


Figure 10A

B

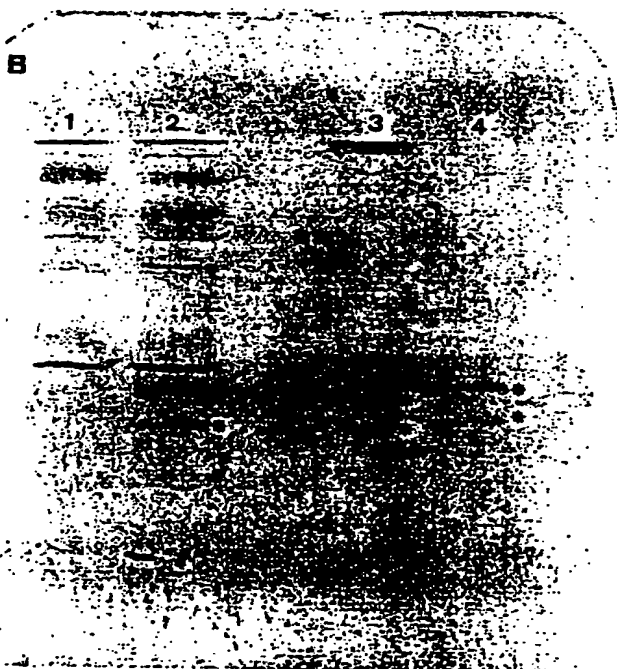


Figure 10B

A

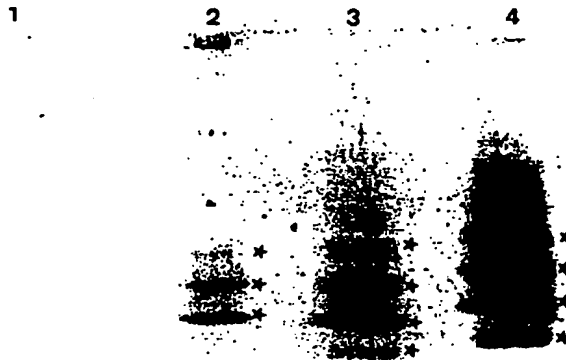


Figure 11A

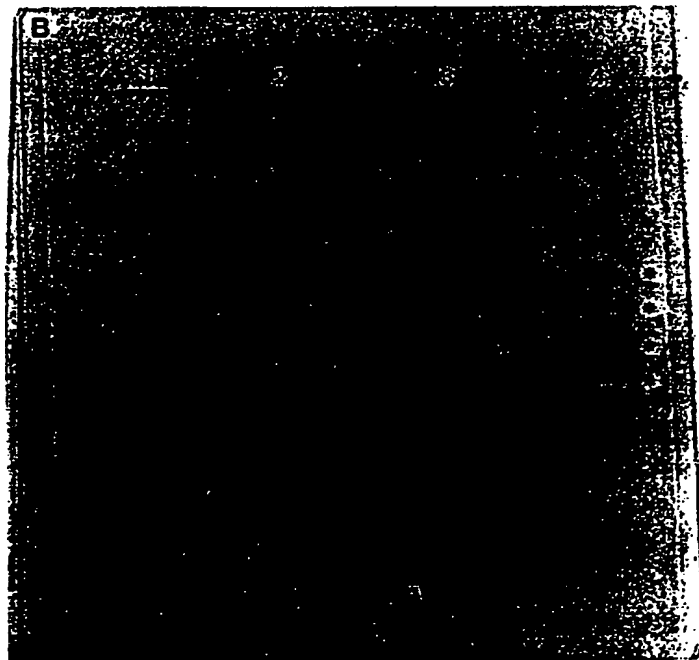


Figure 11B

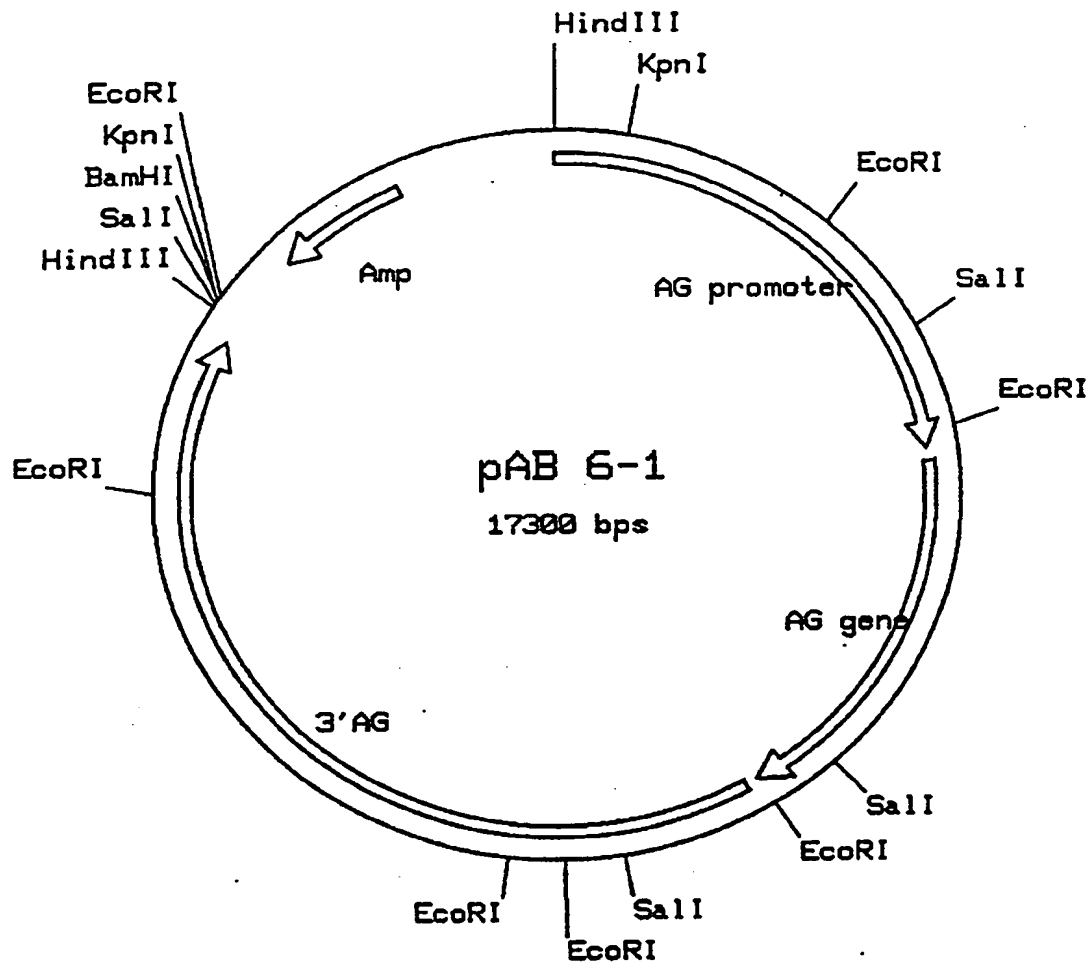


Figure 12

AG/PHYTASE GENE FUSIONS BY PCR

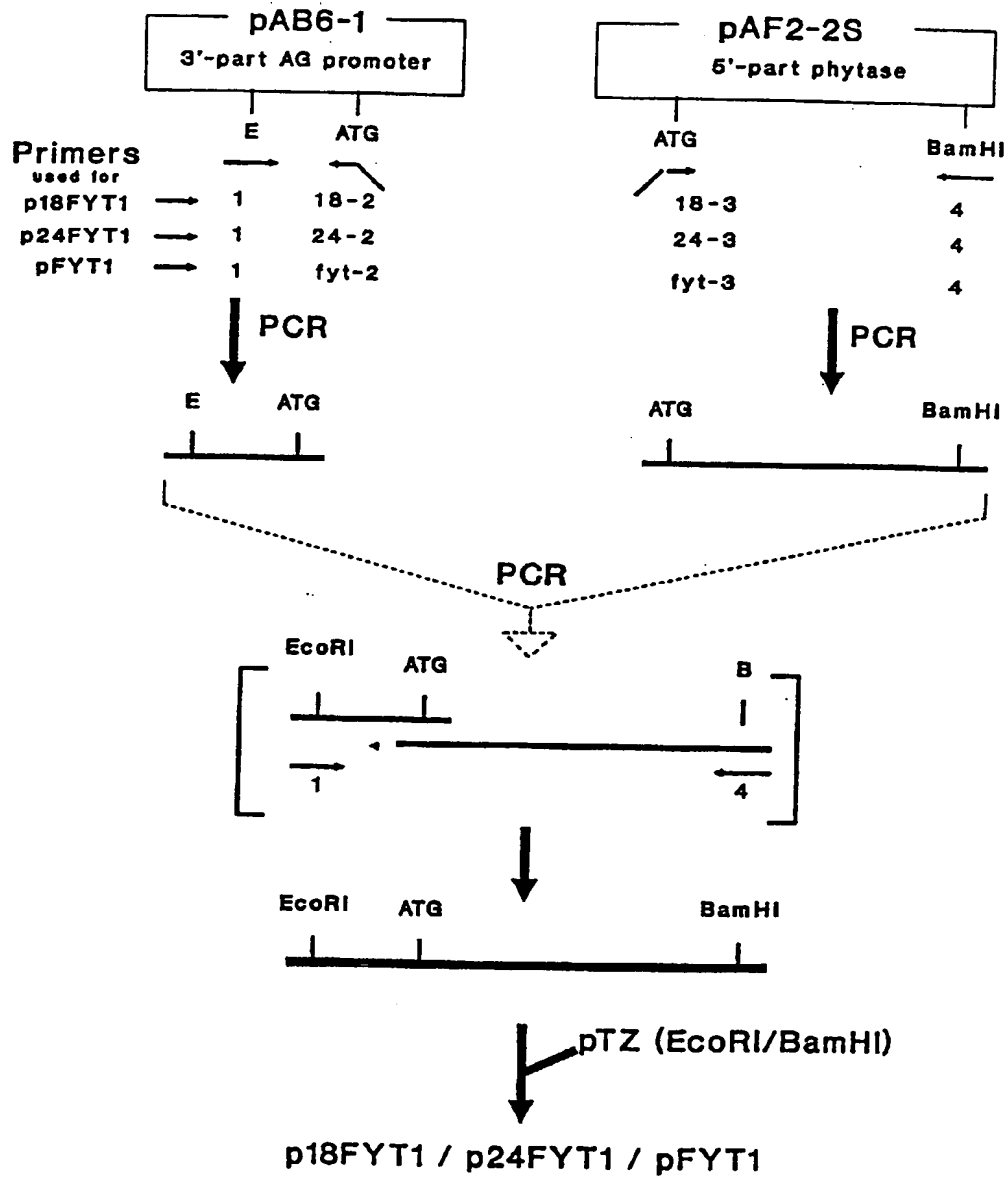


Figure 13

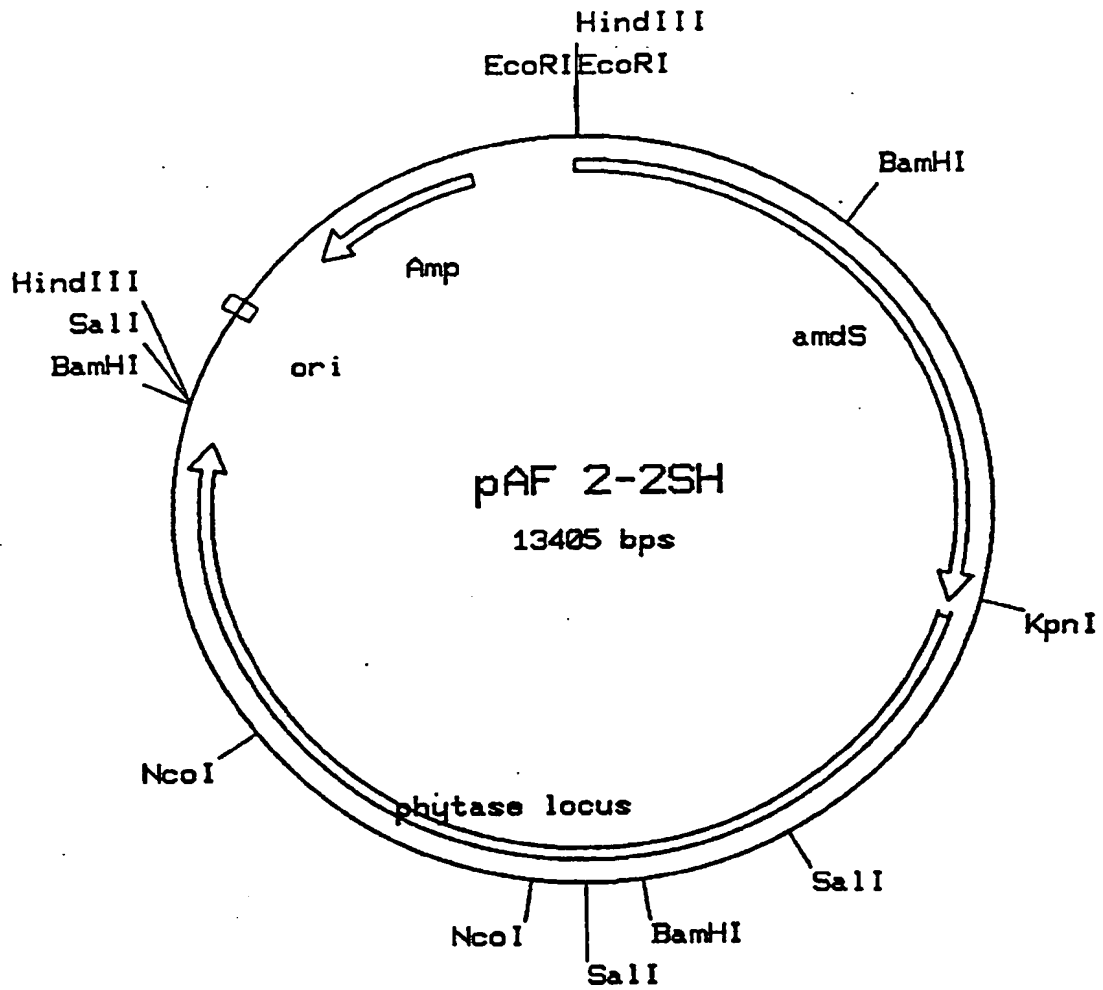


Figure 14

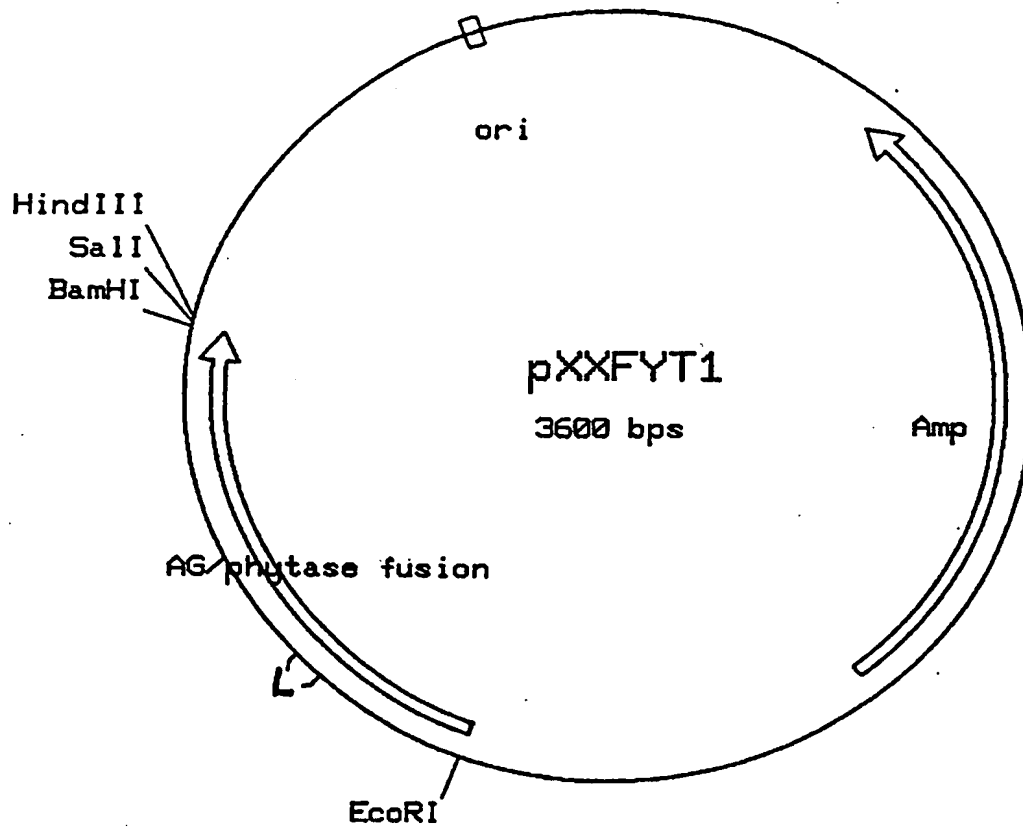


Figure 15a

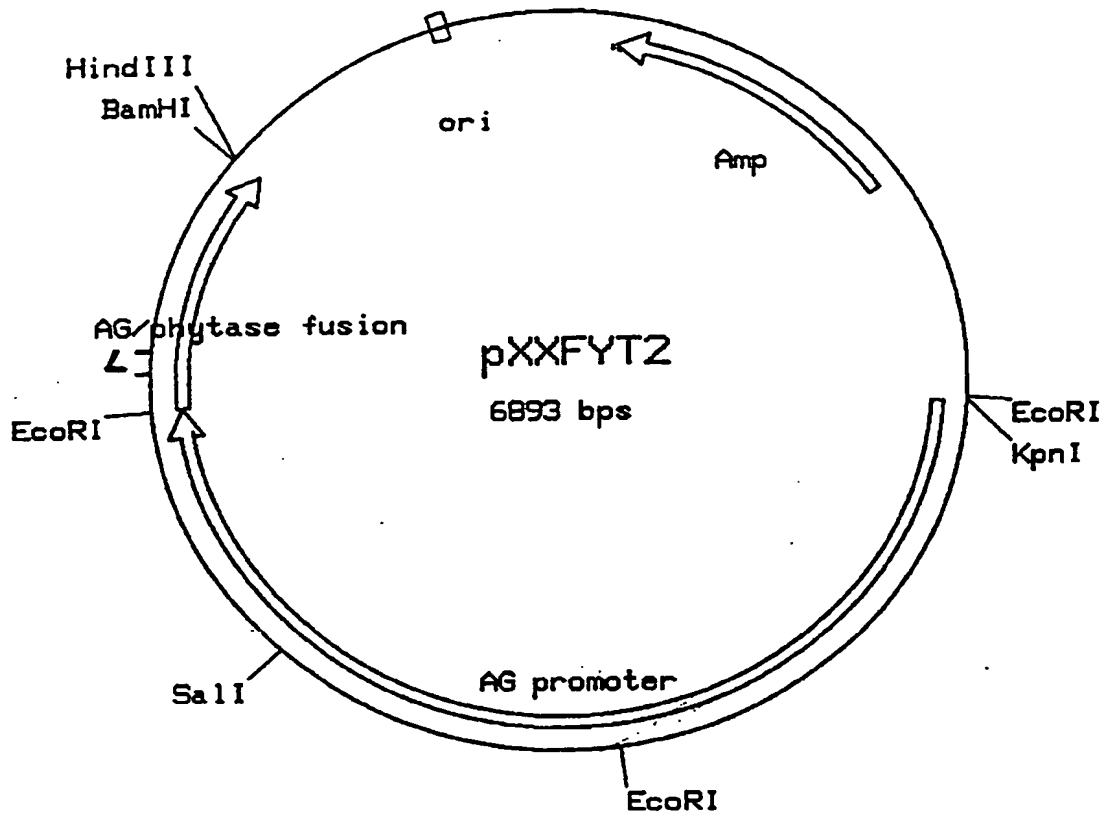


Figure 15b

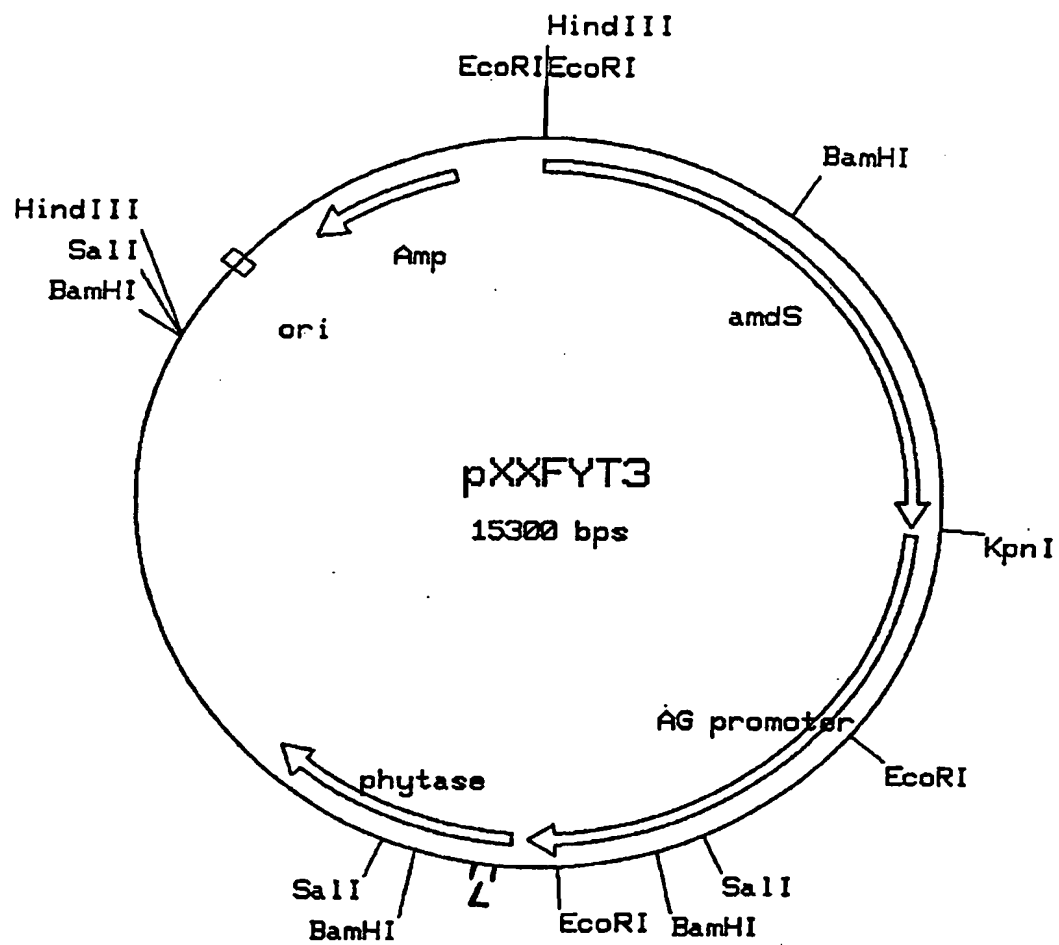


Figure 15c

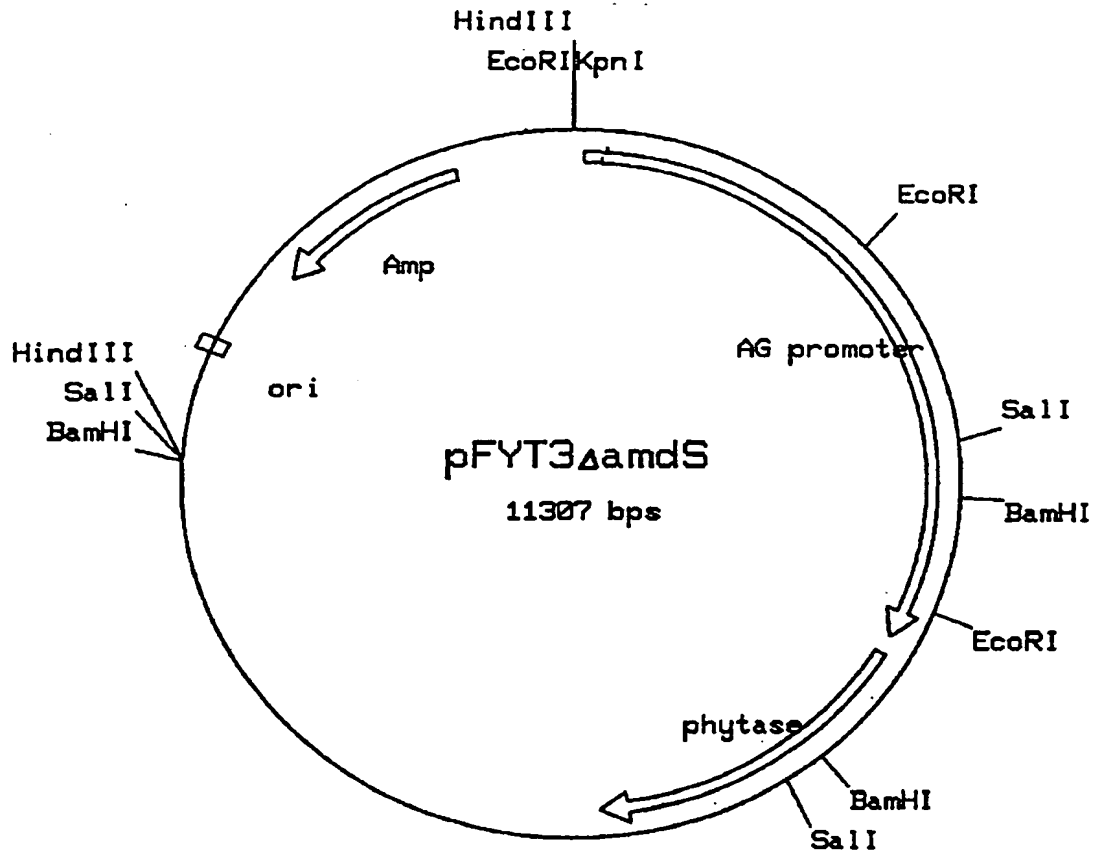


Figure 16

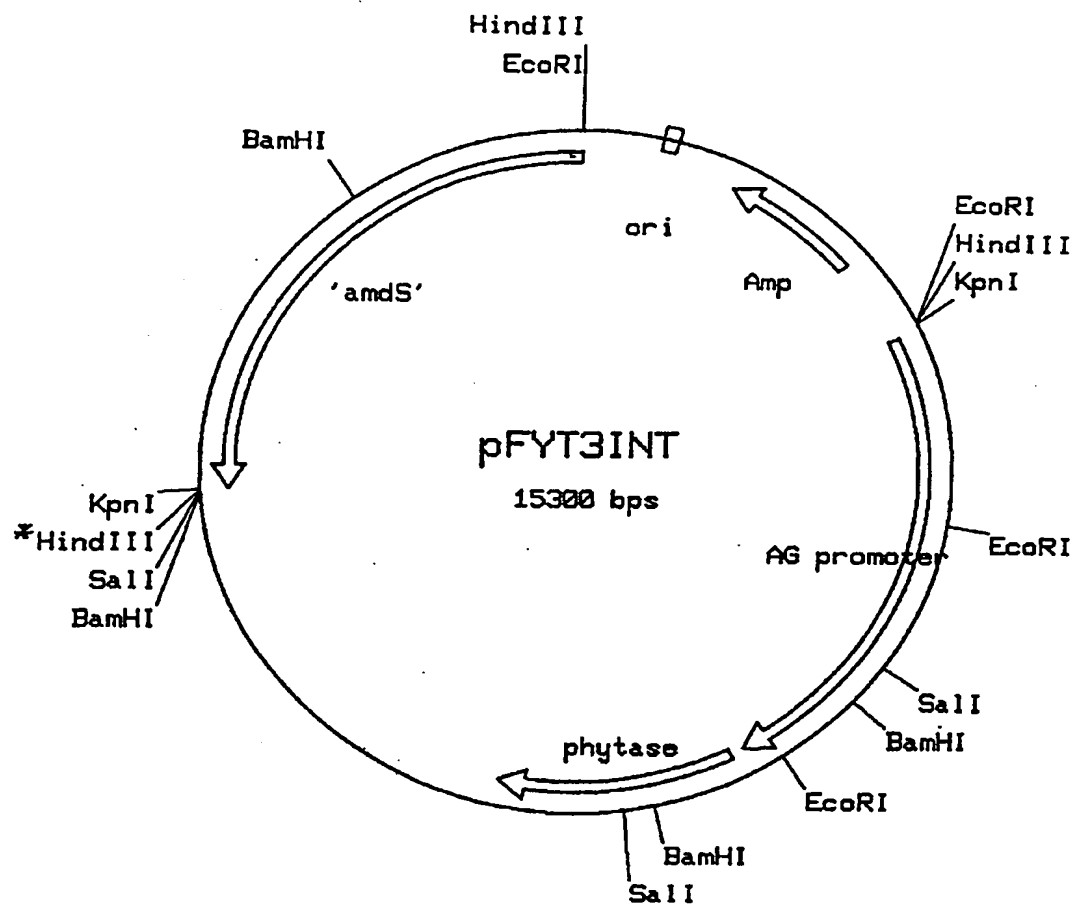


Figure 17

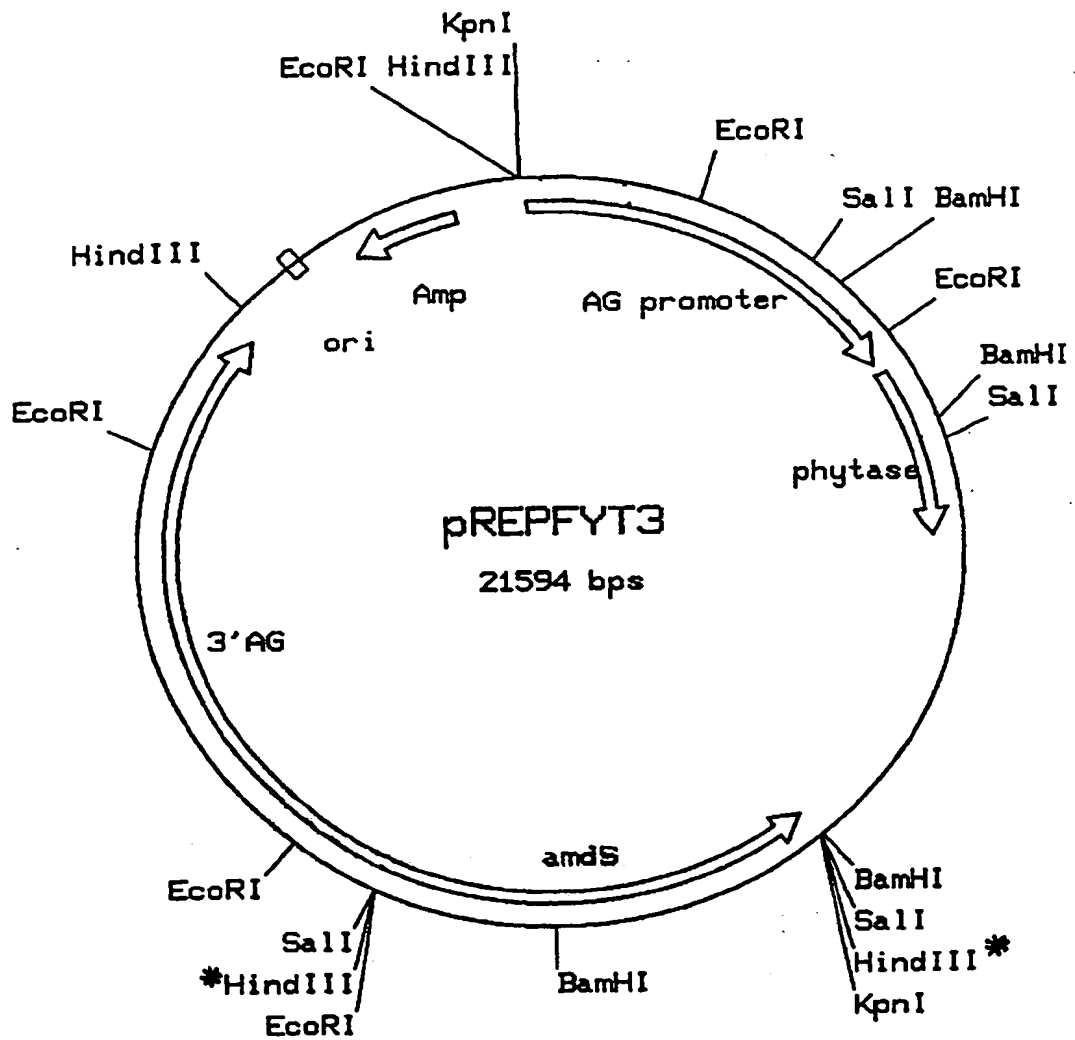


Figure 18

EP 0 420 358 B1

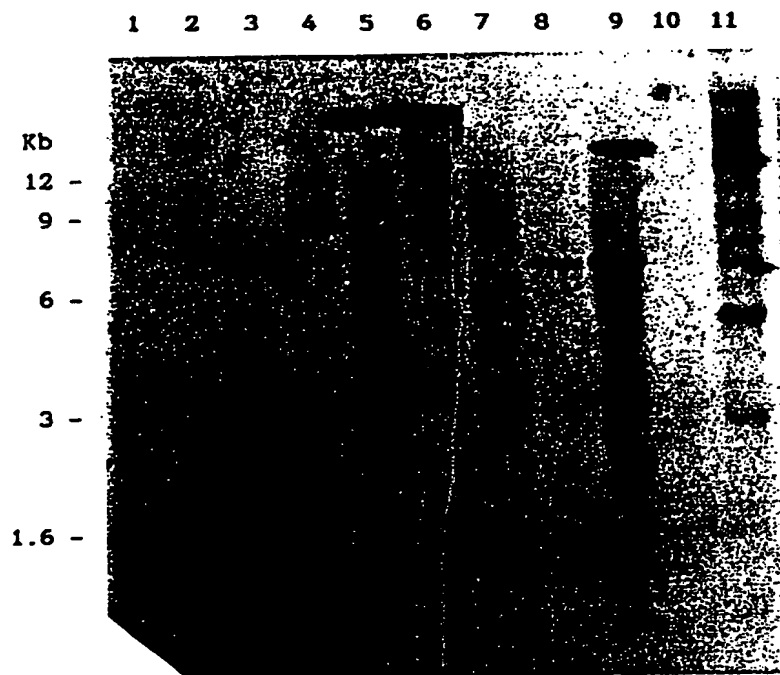


FIGURE 19 A

EP 0 420 358 B1

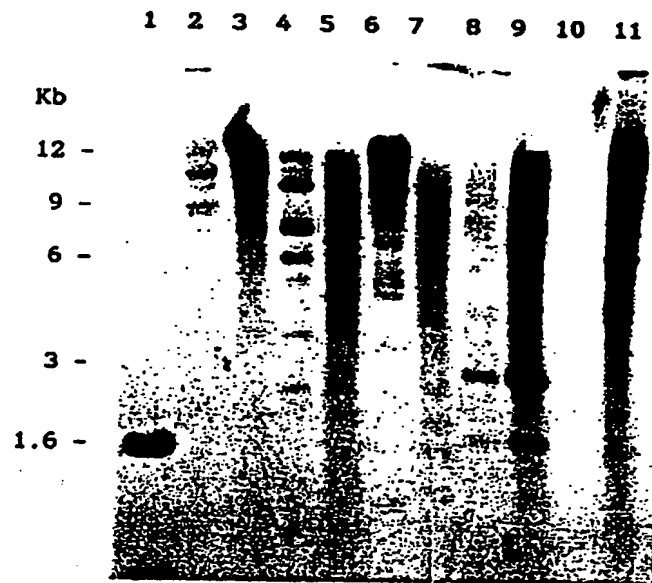


FIGURE 19 B